

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Female Self-Esteem and Female God-Symbols

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
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## Abstract

This paper examines the question of the psychological relationship between God-symbolism and self-esteem. An exploratory case study of a group of Christian feminists who report increased feelings of self-esteem associated with the use of female God-symbols provides the basis for this thesis. The author contends that it is because of the specific nature of symbols that female symbols for God can have the power to influence women's self-esteem. C. G. Jung's theory of the function of symbols is utilized to test this thesis.

Chapter one sets forth the purpose of this paper and defines terms important to this thesis. The methodology of this thesis is explained, particularly in regard to the collection of data and the selection of a psychological theory to apply to that data.

Chapter Two examines information gathered from the exploratory study. As well, autobiographical published material by women reporting their experiences of using female God-symbols is presented and discussed. This chapter establishes that a group of women exist who use female symbolism for God and report increased feelings of self-esteem when they do so. Chapter Three describes C. G Jung's theory regarding the function of symbols. His



theory is applied to the data of Chapter Two to explain how and why God-symbols can function in this instance to raise self-esteem.

Chapter Four presents the conclusions of this study. It is concluded that Jungian psychological theory supports the thesis that female symbols for God can have the power to influence self-esteem. His theory is further discussed in relation to whether it adequately accounts for all of the data of this paper and whether a Jungian explanation of God-symbolism is compatible with the basic tenets of Christian feminism. Both questions are answered in the affirmative, although the author points out that Jung's concept of God is at variance with the Christian feminist concept of God. This is not seen as nullifying the value of his theory in its application to this group of women. It is pointed out that a major strength of Jung's theory particularly in regard to Christian feminism is his recognition that symbols are influenced by culture and that they can change over time. The author concludes that although Jung's theory adequately explains why symbols are powerful, an ever-expanding understanding of symbols must continually be sought for humanity in every time.

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For Ron,  
with love



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## CHAPTER 1

Theologians agree that one's image of God is largely formed through the use of symbols. H. Patrick Sullivan maintains that "Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of the symbol....," and that "The symbol makes present to consciousness what is otherwise unseen and unknowable."<sup>1</sup> Nicolai Berdyaev has written, "God can only be perceived symbolically, for it is only by means of symbols that it is possible to penetrate the mystery of His being."<sup>2</sup> Throughout history, whether through Scripture, liturgy, creeds, prayers, theological treatises or in the everyday conversations of ordinary people, words have been used as symbols in reference to and as a description of God. It has been said that the word "God" is itself a symbol

... which pulls together and articulates a vast range of experiences and ideas. What is more, it sets these experiences and ideas at the very center of people's thinking and living. When the word "God" is seriously used, therefore, it carries with it, at least in an implicit way, a complete world picture.<sup>3</sup>

Because humanity's experience of God is perceived and articulated symbolically, and because their symbolism for God carries with it their concept of the world, the power of symbols for God in Christianity cannot be over-rated.

Renewed interest in the importance of God-symbolism has arisen in this century with the advent in the 1960's of liberation theology from black, Third World, and

feminist perspectives. These groups have brought their specific concerns to the question of the relationship between the symbols one uses for God, the personal "image" of God as expressed and informed by such symbols, and one's concept of the surrounding world. In conjunction with those issues, they have frequently focused attention on the question of the psychological relationship between symbols for God and the individual's concept of herself or himself. Feminist theologians in particular have provoked discussion regarding Christianity's symbolism in relation to the individual's self-concept. They assert that the use of solely male symbols for God is neither scriptural nor reflective of women's experience, and that in relation to women's self-concept, such symbolism is damaging to their self-esteem.<sup>4</sup> In North America, feminism presents the strongest and most radical critique of Christianity's core symbolism because they advocate the use of female symbols for God. For this reason they provide a most interesting segment of society from which this thesis can examine the question of the relationship between symbolism for God and one's self-concept, particularly self-esteem.

The psychological relationship between symbolism for God and one's self-esteem is an important question for many groups in society today. Scholars of various disciplines are recognizing that the question of the psychological effect of God-symbolism is an issue in need of further research. In the Social Sciences and



Humanities Research Council of Canada's bulletin of April 15, 1985, the authors suggest that the "... use of a female perspective in theology might lead researchers to question the usual description of the Christian Godhead in male terms."<sup>5</sup> They ask, "What is the effect on female as well as male worshippers?"<sup>6</sup> Many feminist theologians who do not adhere to the Christian faith base their rejection of Christianity on its exclusive use of masculine-based God-symbols. They state that a God symbolized as Father, Lord, Master, King, and He, undermines the struggle for equality, dignity, and power of women.<sup>7</sup> This group is

aware of the traditional theological qualifications that the images and symbols of God point to transcendent reality. But they argue that the life and power of a religious tradition is its core symbols which are repeated in prayer and ritual. These core symbols create long-lasting moods and motivations which operate in psyche and society irrespective of theological qualification. The worship of God through masculine symbolism creates long-lasting and deep-seated psychological expectations that all significant power properly belongs in the hands of men.<sup>8</sup>

"Images of male divinity figures support the authority of males and deprive women of an image of divinity within themselves," states Carol Christ.<sup>9</sup> As well as this criticism from outside of Christianity, many women within the Christian tradition are also questioning its symbolism. Christian feminist theologians Rosemary Ruether, Letty Russel and Phyllis Tribble all emphasize that

symbolism for God must include female symbols if women are to see themselves as "in the image of God" as fully as males are made in God's image.<sup>10</sup> The question of the relationship between symbolism and women's self-esteem is being discussed by the institutions of the Church itself as it struggles with the question of inclusive language in worship services, the ordination of women, and the over-all role of women in the church. Task forces have been organized in major Christian denominations to deal exclusively with language's symbolic function within Christianity. The 1983 "Guidelines for Inclusive Language" promoted by the Anglican and United Churches of Canada states, "Language not only shapes our image of God, but our image of ourselves and our possibilities."<sup>11</sup> In 1979 a task force on language commissioned by the United Presbyterian Church in the United States requested action by the Church as follows:

The task force is asking the church to re-examine language that it uses about God within the life of the church to see how its language is enforcing an idolatrous view of God, which results in distorted humanity and in a church with patterns of male authority and female inferiority.<sup>12</sup>

All of the above sources recognize the importance of words as symbols for God. However, although feminist theologians, Christian feminist theologians, and various church commissions stress the psychological importance of female symbols for God in relation to women's self-esteem,

no explanation is given as to why symbols for God could function in such a manner. The author's interest in this thesis, therefore, is to gain insight into the question of why the use of female symbols for God can influence women's self-esteem.

### I Thesis Statement

The author contends that it is because of the specific nature of symbols that female symbols for God can have the power to influence women's self-esteem.

In order to study this question, a case study approach is most appropriate. By questioning a group of women who use female symbols for God and report positive feelings of self-esteem associated with the use of those symbols, the author obtained first-person accounts of which symbols were being used and what emotional states were experienced in connection with those symbols. In addition to this exploratory case study, further information was gleaned from some North American Christian feminist autobiographical material which relates accounts of increased feelings of self-esteem in connection with the use of God-symbols. These two sources provided a body of data upon which to test a psychological theory of the dynamics involved when symbols function to raise self-esteem. C. G. Jung's theory of the function of symbols will be applied to the data to test the thesis



that the specific nature of God-symbolism enables female symbols for God to influence these women's self-esteem.

## II Organization

This thesis will proceed as follows. In the present chapter the purpose of the thesis will be further clarified. The important terms "symbol," "self-esteem," and "feminist" will be defined and discussed in relation to their use here. The methodology of this thesis will be explained, particularly in regard to the collection of data and the selection of a psychological theory to apply to that data.

Chapter Two will examine information gathered from the exploratory case study of a group of women who use female symbols for God and report that female God-symbols function positively in relation to their self-esteem. As well, published autobiographical material by women reporting their experiences of using female God-symbols will be presented and discussed.

Chapter Three will describe psychologist C. G. Jung's theory regarding the function of symbols. His theory will be applied to the data provided in Chapter Two in order to explain how and why God-symbols can function in this instance to raise self-esteem.

Chapter Four will present the conclusions of this study. The main points of Jung's theory in relation to the thesis that it is because of the specific nature of

God-symbols that female symbols for God can have the power to influence women's self-esteem will be summarized. His theory will be assessed for its adequacy in relation to the experiences of the Christian feminists of this study, and significant beliefs of the Christian feminist movement of which they are a part.

### III Definitions

It is important that several terms be clearly defined in relation to their use in this thesis.

Symbol will be understood in accordance with Tillich's definition.<sup>13</sup> The symbol is something which points beyond itself to something else, and participates in that to which it points. Tillich described the symbol as opening up levels of reality that otherwise would be closed to the individual: symbols unlock previously unknown dimensions and elements of the psyche. Symbols cannot be produced intentionally. In this thesis the general sense of the word God-symbol will be that it is something which does more than merely refer to or depict God, since God is infinite and ultimate. This thesis will understand "God-symbol" to be something which represents for the individual a connection or analogy to God, and this analogy is spontaneously recognized and viewed as significant.<sup>14</sup>

"Self-esteem" will be defined as follow:

By self-esteem we refer to the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to her/himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes her/himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward her/himself. It is a subjective experience which the individual conveys to others by verbal report and other overt expressive behavior.<sup>15</sup>

Self-esteem is one aspect of the larger psychological construct called "self-concept," in which all ideas about oneself would be included. Low self-esteem has been linked to persuasability, personal dissatisfaction, alienation, unhappiness, and the general feeling of a lack of control over the future.<sup>16</sup> Self-esteem has been called "the fundamental determinant of emotional well-being."<sup>17</sup> The level of a person's self-esteem cannot be measured objectively but must depend on what the subject has to say about herself. According to Allport, "the individual has a right to be believed when he reports on himself," and this thesis takes that approach as well in regard to accepting the women's reported experiences as representative of their feelings of self-esteem.<sup>18</sup> The level of one's self-esteem is said to be "extremely difficult to isolate or identify, yet it is integrally involved in every aspect of behaviour, thought and feeling."<sup>19</sup>



This thesis will utilize Webster's dictionary definition of feminism: "The theory of the political economic and social equality of the sexes."<sup>20</sup> "Christian feminism" will be defined by adding to the above definition:

... the belief that mutuality -- mutual submission or deference, mutual concern, mutual servanthood -- is the relational order exemplified by Jesus and specified by the New Testament epistles.<sup>21</sup>

According to those definitions, any person, male or female may be a feminist. This thesis is confined to a study of female feminists. Not all women are feminists because not all women concur with the definitions given above. A short note on feminism in North America will add to the understanding of the information discussed in the remainder of this thesis.

The modern North American feminist movement unofficially began in the early 1960's. A Gallup poll taken in 1962 reported that 90 percent of American housewives did not want their daughters to lead the same type of lives they themselves led.<sup>22</sup> In 1963 Betty Friedan's book, The Feminine Mystique, which describes women as being forced into a domestic role, was published and became a best-seller.<sup>23</sup> During the 1960's and early 1970's NOW (National Organization of Women) was formed across the United States, The National Action Committee for the Status of Women was organized in Canada, and the large

unofficial "women's liberation movement" was born. Many Christians became part of this movement and thus the special term "Christian feminist" was coined. As well as believing in the equality of women and men in political, economic, and social spheres of life, these people believe in the equality of women and men in all areas of church worship and activity as well. Christian feminists view language as a crucial issue to their cause, as do most feminists. They emphasize that the use of female symbols for God is essential in establishing the belief that females are of equal worth to males.<sup>24</sup> Stressing that humanity -- male and female -- is created in God's image, feminist writers frequently claim that the symbolic representation of God as female elevates the whole concept of "the feminine" to a position on an equal plane with "the masculine." Establishing that the female is as God-like as the male provides the foundation upon which Christian feminists promote the equality of rights and responsibilities for women with men in society, in marriage, and in the Church. Christian feminist writers urge that females use feminine words for God because it will increase their personal feeling of self-worth. However, as mentioned by the author earlier, the question of exactly why female words for God can have this effect has not been dealt with.

As noted previously in this chapter, the exploratory case study of Chapter Two presents the data upon which an

investigation of the psychological effects of God-symbolism in relation to self-esteem is conducted. This case study consists of two sources of information. The first is comprised of information gained from published accounts of women who use female symbols for God. This was obtained through a survey of Christian feminist autobiographical material published in English in North America from 1970 to 1985. The criteria for being accepted as data for this thesis was that the writer be Christian, female, use female symbols for God at least some of the time, and that she describe her own experience of using these symbols. While there is a substantial body of published Christian feminist material, there are relatively few authors who actually share their own experience with their readers. (Virginia Ramey Mollenkott is the major exception.)<sup>25</sup> This means that many books and articles discussing and advocating the use of female symbols for God could not be included in this thesis as data because they were not autobiographical. Such major feminist authors as Phyllis Tribble, Rosemary Ruether, Letty Russel, and others are therefore not included in this study. A major source for data in Chapter Two is a Christian Feminist magazine, Daughters of Sarah.<sup>26</sup> Since this magazine solicits personal experiences from its readers it provided first-person accounts valuable to this thesis. A survey of this magazine from 1980 to January of

1986 provided 11 autobiographical articles and letters to the editor describing the use of female God-symbolism.

In order to obtain a more detailed picture of exactly which symbols were being used and what emotions were connected with their usage, an exploratory case study was undertaken. The author mailed a questionnaire (see appendix) to 25 women who were known to be Christian feminists and who were likely to be sensitive to the issue of symbolizing God as female. Their names were obtained through the author's personal contacts within the Christian feminist network. This case study therefore is not a representative sample of all Christian women, nor even of all Christian feminist women. It is more a survey of those who report interest in the issue than any kind of scientific sample. Of the fourteen questionnaires returned, 13 used female God-symbolism and one used only non-gendered symbolism for God. From the 13 women who used female God-symbolism, three were ruled out on the basis of the incompleteness of the returned questionnaire. Eight of the ten included are women who live in various provinces of Canada, two live in the United States. All ten women listed an affiliation with a Christian Church. The denominations listed and the number of women belonging to each denomination are as follows: Anglican (5), United Church of Canada (2), Roman Catholic Church (1), Baptist General Conference (1), Evangelical Covenant (1). The age of the respondents ranged from 30 to 62 years. Five of

the women were between the ages of 30 to 40, two between the ages of 40 to 50, two between the ages of 50 to 60, and one between 60 to 70 years of age. Nine of the ten women are married. Seven are mothers. Three have partially completed university degrees, seven have graduate degrees. Their number includes three clergy-women.

The major questions asked involved the symbols that these women use for God and their reports of their emotions when using those symbols. Questions were worded "How do you feel," or "describe your feelings" when viewing, hearing, speaking, or thinking using female God-symbols. The questionnaire was distributed before the author had singled out self-esteem as a special interest in this thesis, therefore indications of self-esteem as described in Chapter Two are derived from the women's responses and do not occur in relation to any question specifically listing self-esteem as a subject of concern. The questionnaire is attached to this thesis as Appendix A.

In total, the experiences of 25 women who use female symbols for God some of the time and report positive psychological responses when doing so comprise the data for this study. This study does not purport to be comprehensive of all females using female symbols for God, nor does it claim to be statistically significant in any way. The data does, however, provide a foundation of

personal experience upon which a theory of how symbols may function can be applied. By establishing that there is a segment of the population who symbolize God as female and experience positive psychological states when they do so, the writer can then ask the question of why this should be so.

As one of several theories of the function of symbols, Jung's theory was chosen for several important reasons:<sup>27</sup> One reason, of course, was that Jung gives the topic of symbols extensive and serious consideration. Another was that his theory is based on his observation of living human beings and not solely on philosophical conjecture. Since the feminist approach to theology also stresses that "...a feminist theological method should aim, first and foremost, to illuminate experience of the sacred as it arises within women's actual historical existence," Jung's theory seemed particularly appropriate.<sup>28</sup> Jung and feminists both give emphasis and respect to individual experience. Jung's theory also allows for the concept of a Transcendent God and this made his theory most attractive in analyzing Christian material. Although this does not mean that his theory is the best theory from which to interpret the data, it does mean that it offers an explanation that can at least be legitimately considered by Christians who are searching for an answer in regard to the function of God-symbolism.

Jung's theory of symbolism as presented in this thesis is derived from a selection of his writings as well as from Jolande Jacobi's The Psychology of C. G. Jung. Her book is considered an authoritative source for this study because it has Jung's personal endorsement as an accurate synopsis of his theory.<sup>29</sup> It is the "classical" Jungian position which will be set forth in this thesis and the reader is reminded that modern day Jungians may disagree with some of the aspects of his theory as set forth by Jung himself and by Jacobi.

The following thesis does not purport to be an exhaustive study of Christian feminism in North America. Nor does it claim to present evidence that virtually all Christian feminists symbolize God as female, or that female symbolism for God necessarily results in increased self-esteem for all women. It seeks, however, to establish three major points:

1. Some Christian women exist who report that some of the time they symbolize God as female.
2. They report positive feelings of self-esteem when using such symbols.
3. A psychological theory exists which offers an adequate explanation why female God-symbolism can be linked to increased self-esteem.

Footnotes to Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>H. Patrick Sullivan, "Ritual: Attending to the World" Anglican Theological Review, No. 5 (June 1975), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Richard A. Norris, Understanding the Faith of the Church (Toronto: The Anglican Book Centre, 1979), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Prominent Christian Feminist theologians include: Letty M. Russell, Human Liberation From a Feminist Perspective (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976); Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983); and Phyllis Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

<sup>5</sup>Margrit Eichler, and Jeanne La Pointe, On the Treatment of the Sexes in Research (Ottawa: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Carol Christ, "The New Feminist Theology: A Review of The Literature," Religious Studies Review, 3, No. 4 (October, 1977), p. 203.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>10</sup>See note 4. Madonna Kolbenschlag also emphasizes this point in Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1981).

<sup>11</sup>Eva Manley, and Glenys Huws et.al., Guidelines for Inclusive Language (Toronto: Anglican Church of Canada, 1978), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup>United Presbyterian Church Advisory Council on Discipleship and Worship, The Power of Language Among the People of God and the Language about God "Opening the Door," (New York: The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1979), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, "On the Definition of the Symbol," in Joseph R. Royce, ed., Psychology and the Symbol, (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 41-43. Bertalanffy presents a summary of Tillich's list of characteristics of a symbol.



<sup>14</sup>Robert A. Bennett and O. C. Edwards, The Bible For Today's Church, (Toronto: The Anglican Book Centre, 1979), p. 77.

<sup>15</sup>John P. Robinson and Phillip R. Shaver, Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970), p. 46. In keeping with the thesis' emphasis on the importance of symbols and words, I have adjusted this quotation to reflect the inclusion of females. Thus "himself" has been changed to "him/herself."

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>17</sup>David W. Aycock and Susan Noaker, "A Comparison of the Self-Esteem Levels in Evangelical Christian and General Population," Journal of Psychology and Theology, 13, No.13 (1985), p. 199.

<sup>18</sup>R. B. Burns, The Self Concept (New York: Longman Inc., 1979), p. 73.

<sup>19</sup>W. Glenn Wilder, "The Search for Self-Esteem," Journal of Psychology & Theology, 6 (Summer, 1978), p. 184.

<sup>20</sup>"Feminism," Websters New Collegiate Dictionary (Toronto: Thomas Allen and Son Limited, 1980).

<sup>21</sup>Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, The Divine Feminine (New York: Crossroad, 1983), p. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Barbara Deckard, The Women's Movement (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 324.

<sup>23</sup>Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell, 1963).

<sup>24</sup>Authors Russell, Ruether, Tribble, and Kolbenschlag all deal with this area of concern. See notes 4 and 10.

<sup>25</sup>Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Speech, Silence, Action! (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980).

<sup>26</sup>Daughters of Sarah.

<sup>27</sup>Ernst Cassirer's or Susanne Langer's theories regarding symbols could also have been used to analyze the data in regard to the function of God symbolism, but the writer does not believe they would have been as appropriate as Jung's theory. Both writers allow little scope for a Transcendent God and since the author is concerned to investigate a theory which will be useful to

Christianity, their theories were inadequate in this regard. Ernst Cassirer's concept of the symbol as both creating and exhibiting within one's consciousness connections between different things and his idea of the unity of the symbol and thing symbolized are interesting in reference to the question of the relation between self-esteem and God-symbols. However his theory doesn't leave much scope for an objective entity of a Transcendent God with which the symbol can relate. Thus his theory doesn't as satisfactorily meet the contents of the data as does Jung's theory. Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1946), p. 33.

Langer defines symbols as "vehicles for the conception of objects" (as opposed to "signs" which announce objects to a person). Her emphasis on the symbolic function of language allows no room for a Transcendent God as found in Christian feminism. She states, "... the non-rational source of any knowledge vitiates the concept of mind as an organ of understanding." Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 99.

Other theories reviewed and not adopted include: Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970); Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, "On the Definition of the Symbol," in Joseph R. Royce, ed., Psychology and the Symbol, (New York: Random House, 1965); Noam Chomsky, "On the Biological Basis of Language Capacities," in George A. Miller and Elizabeth Lenneberg, eds., The Psychology and Biology of Language and Thought (New York: Academic Press, 1978); ibid., Language and Mind (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1968); Hans Gerog Gadamer, "Man and Language," Philosophical Hermeneutics, trans. and ed. by David E. Linge, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, Ltd., 1970), pp. 59-60; Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Karl H. Pribram, Languages of the Brain (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971).

<sup>28</sup>Beverly Wilding Harrison, "Review of Feminist and Process Thought," Signs, 7, No. 3, 707.

<sup>29</sup>Jacobi, p. ix.

## CHAPTER 2

Sharon Neufer-Emswiler describes what can happen in a worship service where all the participants are women and all the symbols for God are feminine:

At first we felt rather silly and somewhat rebellious substituting "sisterhood" for "brotherhood" and "she" for "he" when speaking of God. But as we moved through the service the mood began to change to seriousness and excitement, reaching a climax at the conclusion of the Scripture reading in which it was said that God's covenant was given to "Sarah and her daughters." The women received those words with spontaneous applause and joyous laughter.<sup>1</sup>

The above account includes few specific details of how words as symbols may be functioning for these women, but it does contain two elements with which this thesis is concerned: the use of female symbols for God, and the response of women to those female symbols. In this instance, by merely substituting feminine pronouns for masculine pronouns, the women reacted with "spontaneous applause and joyous laughter". Emswiler continues, "it was as though we women were hearing those words for the very first time in our lives. God's promise extended to us, the daughters of faith".<sup>2</sup>

The following chapter will demonstrate that for the group of women being studied in this thesis the use of female words or symbols for God results in positive emotional responses similar to those described by Emswiler

above. Data for this study will consist of published personal accounts of women who symbolize God as female, and the results of a case study of women who use female symbolism for God. This will be examined in detail to investigate firstly, the use of female symbols for God, and secondly, the reports about self-esteem connected with that usage. Published accounts will be referred to by the author's name; accounts written by participants in the survey will be referred to by initials in order to insure the privacy of the respondent.

The autobiographical and survey material indicates that these women use many different symbols for God. These symbols include masculine, feminine, and non-gender words or images. Since the focus of this thesis is on their reports of the psychological effects of female God-symbols, it is only the use of feminine symbolism which will be dealt with extensively. However, since these women report that they use masculine symbolism at least some of the time, male God-symbolism will be discussed where it is relevant in comparing the emotional states reportedly connected to masculine as opposed to feminine God-symbolism.

The data indicates that the use of feminine-based symbolism connected with the concept of God falls primarily into the category of God as "Mother", with an accompanying emphasis on God as embodied female (but not necessarily as "Mother"). None of the ten women surveyed

call God "Goddess", but all ten women said that they use symbols connected to the image of God as "Mother" to speak of or think about God. Nine of the ten respondents use the word "Mother" as a direct symbol for God. All ten listed a variety of phrases expressing the maternal functions of God including: "as a child at its mother's knee", "gathering people to her breast", "one in the labour of birthing", "one who labours with us as a mother giving birth", "birthing woman", and "the carrier of Israel in the womb."

It is noteworthy that the one Roman Catholic participant in this survey also listed "Mother" as a symbol for God, but included no reference to Mary, Mother of Jesus. When questioned why Mary was not included in any of her symbolism she explained that, for her, Mary as the Mother of God does not represent the feminine aspect of God, or a female God. Information from the published accounts of Roman Catholic women who symbolize God as female confirms that they also do not regard Mary as a feminine God-symbol. In fact, in the two essays referred to below in which the writers identify themselves as Roman Catholic, Mary is never mentioned. Author Meinrod Craighead, a former Roman Catholic nun, writes about her spiritual life which has been dominated by her experience of God as Mother:

The creative spirit I know within me  
has the face and force of a woman.  
She is my Mother, my Mothergod, my

generatrix, the divine immanence I experience signified in all creation.... Throughout half a lifetime of Christian worship my secret worship of God the Mother has been the sure ground of my spirituality.<sup>3</sup>

Lorna Hochstein, another Roman Catholic author, describes her need to see and hear female symbols for God:

There have been and will be weeks when I cease to pray, feeling betrayed by God who is called my father, my brother, but never my mother or my sister, feeling that somehow even God is no match for the sexism of the world. Even God's feminine self is ignored and unacknowledged in the constant enunciations of "he". There are days and weeks when I remain a Catholic only from habit, and when I can say, "Yes, I am a Catholic", only through grim determination. There are times when I feel so alone and so alienated from the God who is king, judge, warrior, and father, that I wonder if and how it is that I could ever be a child of that God.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, Mary does not function as a female God symbol for Hockstein, nor does the symbolism of Mary appear to assuage Hockstein's sense of alienation as she concludes her essay by saying, "Today I am a Catholic. But tomorrow I may leave." While it is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss the complex symbolism surrounding Mary, it is important to note that whatever Mary may symbolize for these women, she does not nullify their felt need to symbolize God as female.<sup>5</sup>

The collected autobiographical material under consideration here strongly supports the findings from the questionnaires that "Mother" is a predominant symbol among

women who use feminine symbols for God. Author Virginia Ramey Mollenkott particularly emphasizes the symbol of God as "Mother giving birth", as she criticizes the evangelical-fundamentalist churches to which she formerly belonged:

One thing that strikes me as very ironic is that in the evangelical and fundamentalist culture you hear a lot about new birth and being born again. But scripturally those images are affirmations of the female nature of God.... And we need to raise up this fact that all birth imagery is affirmation of God's female component.... We are manifestations of a divine nature which gives birth.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of God as a female who gives birth is also illustrated by W.B., a clergywoman who, in describing her feelings when she sees female symbols for God, explained that she has a pettipoint picture of a pregnant woman on her advent stole, "... and it makes me smile every time I look at it and think of God's identification with womankind."

Julie Cadwallader-Staub symbolizes God as female and uses her own pregnancy as an analogy to the unfolding nature of God's work in the world:

Here, now, in the midst of pregnancy, God is present in full. God manifests herself in unique irreplaceable ways during this time. My pregnancy provided many months of practice in letting go, turning worry into acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. It afforded ample opportunity to reflect on the immediacy of God's wondrous work in my life, as this new life developed inside me. An avenue

for teaching and for miracles, my pregnancy showed me that to treat pregnancy as a means to an end would be to miss a great deal of God's love and work as it unfolds. Similarly, God is here, among us. She teaches us who she is and how she works in our world.<sup>7</sup>

These women's use of "Mother" and birth imagery for God is possibly reflected again in their choice of "Creator" as a symbol for God. In answer to the question, "List all of the words or images you use to speak of or think about God", eight of the ten survey respondents also listed God as "Creator", making it the second most frequently used term for God. Since the question asked respondents to list all words and symbols, whether male, female, or of no gender, it is undeterminable whether "Creator" is meant as specifically female. To understand fully what this symbol means to each woman, one would need to know whether "Creator" was understood as one who forms or shapes something from material external to oneself, or whether one considered "Creator" to mean one who shapes something within and gives birth to it. The former could be considered either masculine or feminine symbolism, the latter would generally be considered as feminine symbolism. For example, if God is referred to as "Creator" who shapes humanity from the dust of the earth, then "Creator" can be either masculine or feminine, or perhaps neither. But if God is referred to as "Creator" who gives birth to humanity, nurses it at the breast,



etc., then the symbolism is undeniably feminine. Because of the emphasis the respondents place on God as birthgiver, the author strongly suspects that there is an association between the role of Creator and Birthgiver for these women. One respondent explicitly states that she connects creation and giving birth. DH writes:

... when I became pregnant for the first time I felt a very strong connection with God as Creator. I felt an affinity with God as a female presence in a way that I never had before. It was very moving and I felt greatly blessed in this new awareness.

Meinrod Craighead also equates God the Mother with God the Creator, as she writes, "The Mother has but one law: 'Create, make as I do make'. Obedience to this law is the deepest obedience and the worthiest worship of her."<sup>8</sup> It cannot be stated with certainty, however, that the symbol "Creator" is a female God-symbol for all the women in the study.

As well as an emphasis on the creative and birthing image of God, authors wrote of the care a traditional mother provides for her children. After taking part in a worship service that employed only female symbols for God, Reta Finger writes that God as female was present in her everyday events: "The Water of life swirled in a bathtub into which I climbed, and God herself got down on her knees to wash me clean of sin and guilt".<sup>9</sup>

Sheryl Lee Olsen equates the Mother symbol with a mother's tender care, protection, acceptance, forgiveness and love in her poem, "So Now..."

So now,  
You are our Mother  
    who art in heaven,  
    whose name we hallow,  
        whose wings protect us,  
        whose arms enfold us --  
    Who gave us life.

So now,  
Your tender, caring aspect  
    can be unleashed;  
    like a macho man  
    released from the  
    strong and silent bonds  
    that kept him cold and awesome.

So now,  
I can approach You,  
    even when I've sinned,  
    and know Your acceptance  
        Your forgiveness and  
        Your love.

So now,  
Your fearful mien has softened  
    into Mother's smiles and concern.  
The rod is spared,  
    and I am Holy loved.10

Olsen's description of God as more approachable as "Mother" is echoed by nine of the ten respondents' answers to the question regarding what effect, if any, they felt seeing, hearing, or using female symbols for God has had on their feelings toward God. "It has helped me appreciate God's forgiveness and reconciling love to think of a Mother/Father God. My own father was quite severe and judgemental, my mother more loving and gentle. To think of God as nurturing, as "Mother", has softened the

image." (DNM) MH reports that she equates a female God with being less authoritarian, more kind, more merciful, and more forgiving -- "When I read the Prodigal Son, I always think of my mother as being the one who would have met me."

Although eight out of the ten respondents answered positively that they had enjoyed a warm, loving relationship with their father, they link the overcoming of distance and barriers between themselves and God to their use of the symbol of God as Mother. One can "boldly enter the holy ground before God's presence" when one uses female symbols, writes DM. WB reports that female symbolism for God

... makes God more approachable for me and sometimes, more understanding of my concerns and feelings as a woman. That makes God safer and less judgmental, though challenging me to develop myself. Sometimes it helps me to be more trusting and dependent on God. The birthing image makes me feel both love and pity (compassion) for God who struggles so much for our redemption.

NF says that when she uses female symbols for God, "I feel closer. I feel joyous. I have a sense of the God within as being more special. I have a sense of the God 'above' as being more nurturing, caring, softer, more loving." MM writes "This God knows fully who I am, fully what pain women struggle with, fills me with a depth of acceptance of myself by God." DH says, "I feel closer to God -- She becomes more whole when I allow my imagery for her to

expand to God as female." AH reports, "I certainly feel more loved, understood, and included. God is more accessible to me in prayer." SBJ says, "God feels more accessible, less threatening, more encompassing." Patricia Broughton writes that female symbols for God relieve her feelings of alienation from God:

From my journal, Tuesday, April 6, 1981. Exhilarated. Thinking, dreaming (literally) about the Motherhood of God. Beginning in my gut to experience the intellectual concept. (But I still can't pray aloud "Mother" without feeling very self-conscious.) In our spiritual partner prayer time Drew prayed that we might dive deep into the Motherhood of God and I felt -- exhilarated.... When I think of God as She, and that I am Her daughter, I begin to understand and feel what so many evangelicals and fundamentalists say they feel -- a very special, personal relationship with a God who loves them. Most of the time I don't feel that at all. I feel very alienated from this exclusively male God.11

A study of both the autobiographical and survey material indicates the complexity of the symbols surrounding God as Mother. There are at least two major ways in which this symbol appears to be significant to these women: (1) God as Mother is viewed as one who gives birth and cares for her children (humanity), and is seen as more compassionate and approachable than a Father God. (It has been noted above that this symbol of God as Mother may be related to Creator symbols) and (2) God as Mother is viewed as God identified closely to femaleness, i.e.,

She is symbolized as having a literal female body. The symbol of God as a Mother who gives birth has been documented and described in much of the previously quoted material above. It appears frequently in both survey and autobiographical material. The symbol of God as embodied female is, of course, linked to this symbol of God performing the female bodily function of giving birth, but it also has dimensions other than solely birth imagery. These will now be considered.

The survey reports indicate that there is an aspect of female God-symbolism which is important to these women essentially because it links the female body to divinity. DH says, "When I hear female words for God I feel a sense of justice and joy because as we include God as female, so, too, we more fully include women in the Body of Christ." It has previously been noted in this essay that the symbol of God as Mother was reported to engender feelings of closeness, approachability, and affirmation among these women. Similar feelings also are evoked when the women think or speak of God using female symbols other than the Mother symbol. There seems to be a more personal identification with God, as demonstrated by MH's comments. She explains that female symbols for God make her feel that "I am the image of God: God is the image of me." The data indicates that sameness of physical characteristics is an important factor in the women's symbolism for God.

The importance of the identification of her own female body with a female God-symbol is evident from Mollenkott's comments about the image of "the breasted God." She talks about the Hebrew name for God, el sadday, usually translated as "the God of the mountains," but also meaning "the God of the breasts," or "the breasted God", according to Old Testament scholar, Phyllis Tribble.<sup>12</sup> This link to a female physical body is important to Mollenkott as she explains this God is "... somebody I can identify with." She has not always felt this identification with God, and she describes the effect male symbolism for God had on her life:

If I would have been asked to draw God, or if I had been able to get to the unconscious image of God in my mind, God was very white, very old, very male, and God was very rich. I was only one of those things -- I was white.... Because I was so eager to love this God who was male, I gave away my power to whatever was male in my environment -- whatever looked like God.... That God was so utterly Other than me was very damaging to my self concept.<sup>13</sup>

Candace Waldron, who writes that when God is symbolized as male she experiences God as external to her, believes that

... the most devastating effect of relating to a predominantly male God is that we as women can see ourselves like God (or in God's image), only when we deny our sexual identity. Unlike boys and men in our culture, we will never have our full sexual identity affirmed as being in the image and likeness of God as long as

God is male. Women, therefore, have to struggle harder than men to find God within ourselves.<sup>14</sup>

This identification of the female body and its functions with a female God and God's functions has been previously illustrated also by Julie Cadwallader-Staub's description of her own pregnancy as analogous to God's work in the world.<sup>15</sup> Again, there is an identification of the female body with female God-symbolism.

A different aspect of symbolizing God as embodied female (and what might be called the only "picture" of God which emerges from this study), is provided by Meinrod Craighead who writes that she first experienced God as Mother when she was seven years old. Soon after that she happened to see a photograph of the Venus of Willendorf. She says, "I recognized my Mothergod.... The recognition was immediate and certain.... This discovery brought a sense of relief and well-being and gratitude that has never diminished."<sup>16</sup> However, since the head of the image of the Venus of Willendorf is covered with what appears to be waves of water, her face is not visible, and Craighead's "one essential prayer" is, "Show me your face."<sup>17</sup> Craighead writes that it is the worship of God the Mother, "... the participation in her body, in the natural symbols and rhythms of all organic life... (that) have been a steadfast protection against the negative patriarchal values of Christianity, a faith I still profess."<sup>18</sup>

Another facet of the importance these women give to identifying the female body with God-symbolism is indicated by several authors' references to Christ symbolized as female. The embodiment of Christ as female is discussed by Corinne Peterson who had no difficulty imaging God (as the first Person of the Trinity), as female, but hesitated to use female symbols for Christ:

I felt like a blasphemer seeing Jesus as female on the cross -- as a woman with breasts. But I reasoned with myself that had the culture been matriarchal, God may well have incarnated Herself in a daughter. Still, I felt shocked at myself for even imagining Jesus as a woman exposed on the cross. How frivolous! Hearing myself say that exposed as never before my own skewed thinking about myself as a woman and how I had been co-opted by my culture into a degenerate view of my femininity.

Why not breasts? What more basic and vivid symbol could there be of giving life to the world? I wept as I realized how even with all my consciousness-raising, I have continued to trivialize myself.<sup>19</sup>

An anonymous female author who had been sexually assaulted as a child writes of how she achieved a more intimate knowledge of Christ. After she viewed the figure of a woman, arms out-stretched as if crucified, which was hanging below the cross in a Toronto church, she wrote:

Oh God,  
through the image of a woman  
crucified on the cross  
I understand at last.  
In the warmth, peace, and sunlight of  
your presence  
I was able to uncurl the tightly



clenched fists.  
For the first time  
I felt your suffering presence with me  
in that event.  
I have known you as a vulnerable baby,  
as a brother, and as a father.  
Now I know you as a woman.  
You were there with me  
as the violated girl  
caught in helpless suffering.<sup>20</sup>

In reporting on how she feels when female symbols for God are used, WB also mentions possibly the same sculpture referred to above. She says, "Once I saw a female Christ on the cross and found it a very powerful and positive experience."

Mollenkott indirectly links the female body to Christ through the symbolism of giving birth.<sup>21</sup> She explains that Jesus comforted his disciples by telling them that their present suffering would turn to joy, just as the suffering woman in labour "whose hour has come" sees her suffering turned into joy with the birth of her child (John 16:21). Mollenkott links John 17:1, Jesus' prayer before his crucifixion, to the birth imagery of John 16:21. She understands Christ's words, "Father, the hour is come", to mean "The hour of Christ-the-Mother's pain and sorrow: the hour of the birth pangs" in which a "New Humanity" is brought to birth.<sup>22</sup>

Symbols other than "Mother," birth symbols, or symbols involving the imaging of a female body for God, were also cited by the respondents in this survey. They included God as Mother Eagle, Hen, Sister, and Wisdom. Water was also included as a symbol for God by one survey

respondent as well as figuring in Meinrad Craighead's vision of the Mother (The Venus of Willendorf). For reasons which will be explained in Chapter three, water will be accepted as a female symbol for God. None of these symbols appeared more than twice in the survey, suggesting that they are not used as commonly as is "Mother." However, they do indicate that the female aspect of God is represented by more than the human Mother symbol. All of these symbols are thought of as female, either in regard to the literal sex of the symbol (i.e., mother eagle, hen, sister), or to the gender of the word. (Wisdom is in the female gender in the Hebrew of the Old Testament where this symbol occurs linked to the idea of God. Mollenkott points out that Jesus also referred to Wisdom in the feminine gender in Matthew 11:19, i.e., "wisdom is known of her children." Mollenkott links Wisdom to Christ, the Logos.)<sup>23</sup>

Adding another complex dimension to the discussion of God symbolized as embodied female is the importance that women in this study give to female clergy. In response to the question, "Describe your feelings in detail when you are present at a worship service involving female clergy," nine of the ten women surveyed reported experiencing positive emotions. The one Roman Catholic respondent wrote that she has never "had the honour (of being at a service involving female clergy), but I would be most happy and feel that at least a good part of the battle had

been won."(MH) Two women explained that it would "depend on the performance of female clergy, and whether, or if they project differently from male."(LW) MM responded, "It depends on whether I respect them and their style. If I do respect the woman and her style, I feel affirmed as a woman." DH writes, "When I am present at a service with female clergy I feel a sense of pride and justice.... I like to see women in places of authority-- It restores the balance that I believe God intended for us." SBJ writes of the presence of female clergy, "This is great. Female clergy and other female participants make me feel the most included. Above language." The terms the respondents used to describe feelings when present at worship services involving female clergy included: "balanced," "affirmed," "included," "challenged to see myself as responsible to God in a fresh way," "important," and "worthwhile."

Patricia Park, an Episcopal priest, tells of her emotional reactions when for the first time in the history of the Episcopal Church, female priests presided over the celebrating of the Eucharist at a service in 1973.

Now we were to celebrate the service  
barred for centuries to women clergy  
in the Catholic tradition.

Bright yellow chasubles and dalmatics  
with orange crosses had been made for  
the priests and deacons taking part in  
the service. In the vesting room  
there was great tension; the press was  
everywhere. But when I put on my  
dalmatic I felt vested. It was so  
astonishingly bold and yet so  
necessary that women stand at the

communion table. Sometimes I've experienced feelings of unworthiness from never having seen myself represented by another woman at the altar of God.... I yearned to see another woman bless and feed us with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally the time came. Because I was the assisting deacon, I stood to Carter Heyward's right. She raised her arms and sang, "The Lord be with you." The response came back, "And also with you."

"Lift up your hearts." "We lift them up unto the Lord." I was transfixed on that spot. The church seemed to radiate, and yet everything was curiously familiar. After communion people spoke and hugged and cried with each other. It was for me a powerful and positive experience of what Mary Daly calls "living on the boundary."<sup>24</sup>

In responding to the question regarding clergywomen, DNM notes her own unexpected reaction to the presence of female clergy at a worship service: "I was surprised by my first reaction at the first service I attended at which a woman priest was presiding. I felt a closeness and affinity -- as if a barrier had been removed -- that was completely unexpected." Virginia Ramey Mollenkott also describes her first experience of receiving communion from a female Episcopal priest as being very meaningful to her:

You talk about denial -- I never let myself know that I was bothered by masculine imagery... I never let myself know that I was bothered by not being represented behind the altar rail, until one day, the first time I took communion and a woman was taking charge of the elements... and I cried. Suddenly my denial broke down. It would hurt too much if I let myself know -- In other words I am saying

that many women don't let themselves know -- You may think that you've never been bothered by any of this. Maybe you have as good a "denier" as I do, as good a protective device, but when I saw a woman -- I was actually represented there -- I wept so hard she looked me up afterwards to see what kind of spiritual trouble I was in.<sup>25</sup>

It cannot be conclusively established from the survey responses whether each woman views a clergyperson as an actual symbol of God, or as a representative of the people before God, or as both. For most of the ten women, however, the data indicates that the presence of a woman as priest does in some way function as a symbol of God. NF reports that when she is at a worship service involving female clergy, "I feel emotional, overwhelmed, delighted.... I feel closer to God since they (clergywomen) are like me, I am like them." She also reports that receiving communion from a female priest for the first time made her realize how much she had been affected by "male symbolism for God," so for her the priest clearly functions as a God-symbol.

The author has also observed that at a conference of 700 Christian feminist women it was a common occurrence for the women to cry when they received the bread and wine from female clergy.

The strong positive statements of the women involved in the survey, the personal accounts from autobiographical material, and the author's own observations suggest

strongly that for these women female clergy represent a symbolic connection of the feminine with God.

Reta Finger writes that after leading a worship service in her church using images of God as a woman giving birth, a mother eagle and a mother hen, the symbols functioned for her much as in a musical fugue:

This is what happened to me during the week that followed. Suddenly the idea of God-as-female became a magnet toward which every other image rushed, and truth and glory poured in.<sup>26</sup>

Finger's description of the emergence of female God-symbols into her life carries with it the qualities of suddenness, spontaneity and intuitiveness mentioned by seven of the ten women surveyed. They report that their acceptance of female symbols for God occurred rather suddenly, although reading feminist books and attending educational seminars dealing with inclusive language were cited as important in making them aware that female symbolism for God was a possible option. The following are some of their answers to the question, "Tell me how you came to use female words for God."

A spiritual experience which led me to use feminine words for God first happened about 1979, (although I had thought this for years), at a Social Justice Institute... during which religion and women were discussed. This prayer came to my mind as I sat in chapel: (Her prayer begins: "Our Mother, Who is with us on earth, Spirit is your name...") (MH)

A conference, "In God's Image," stands out in my mind as the first time I

ever got any support for my feelings.... I had not been aware of how much I had been affected until I heard that I, too, was made in God's image, heard female imagery for God, met, received communion from my first female priest. I felt like I had come home. (NF)

I believe it came to me intuitively.... I discovered the female images of God and intuitively I believe I began using these in my personal prayer life. I believe it came quite naturally because I believe so deeply in women and men reflecting God's image. This basis has opened me up to easily receiving female images of God. (MM)

Becoming a mother five and one-half years ago gave new meaning to God's love for people. I began to identify my "motherly feelings" with the love God has for us. (AH)

The survey indicates that words as symbols for God are important to these women. In response to the question, "Do you ever change the words of hymns or the liturgy to feminine words or inclusive language?" all ten respondents replied that they did. Nine women make the changes out loud, one changes the words silently to herself. Four women did not explain why they made changes. The following are some of the reasons the remaining six women gave for changing words:

It makes me feel more comfortable, more true to myself to do this. (DH)

I can't stand the exclusion! I need to express what I and my sisters and brothers (with whom I share this deep sense of the fulness of God) know to be true. I need to do it for myself personally -- to do something with my

anger. I need to worship God in Her/His fulness. (MM)

Because I feel that I am including myself, women, the feminine in the worship service. It softens my hurt and anger enough in order for me to worship. (NF)

Sometimes I just have to witness to the truth! (AH)

Anna J. Beatty writes: "There is much of the Goddess in my church but she is rarely named.... And yet, I need to say and hear her name.... I say her name. I call upon the Mother of Life for the wisdom and courage to be all that I am."<sup>27</sup>

In order to ascertain what influence, if any, hearing, saying, or seeing female symbols for God had on the individual's self esteem, rather general questions were asked in the survey. (The word "self-esteem" was not used in formulating questions.) The women were asked what effects, if any, they felt female symbols for God had on how they felt about themselves, their life goals, and God. The participants in the study were unaware that the influence of symbols on self-esteem was the interest of the author. However, their answers to several questions indicate that female God-symbols influence their self-esteem.

In Chapter One self-esteem was defined as "a personal judgment of worthiness." There were four important aspects in that definition: the extent to which the individual believed herself to be capable, significant,



successful, and worthy. These will be discussed in relation to the survey data.

The two personal assessments of being "significant" and "worthy" appear linked in the responses. The women surveyed reported that seeing, hearing, or using female symbols for God made them feel: "more important," "more like I belong," "worthwhile," "affirmed," "more a part of the church," "more God-like." NF states, "I feel affirmed in my femaleness, rather than simply being -- not male." DM says, "My sense of personal identity has grown and deepened considerably as my depth of understanding of what it means to be 'made in the image of God' has increased." WB indicated that she equates female symbols for God with her self-esteem when she writes:

I think it has made me feel more significant and gifted and therefore more powerful as a woman in what is still a male-controlled world. It has not only made me encourage my strength and belief in my intelligence, but has made me encourage the feeling/expressive/dependent side of male friends. I've always felt good about that expressive side of myself and this just reinforces that.

DH says, "It makes me feel stronger in my spirituality, and as a woman. Closer to God-- more worthy somehow." MH says, "I feel more important at liturgies. God is speaking directly to me in my womanness."

Only one of the ten women surveyed reported that female symbols had little effect on how she felt about herself. However, she expanded on her answer as follows:

My strongest sense of personal worth in relation to God comes from what I believe about the Incarnation. That God took human form and placed Himself/Herself in our earthly state to suffer, rejoice, live, and die as we do gives me a tremendous sense of personal worth -- every time I think deeply about it I feel ten feet tall!  
(DM)

Her explanation of the source of her sense of self worth (i.e., the Incarnation), includes the use of a female pronoun for God and therefore some female God-symbolism could be functioning in regard to her sense of self-worth.

Sheryl Lee Olson's closing line of her poem, "So Now..." indicates her feeling of being "significant" or "worthy" as she says "... and I am Holy loved."<sup>28</sup> Annette B. Huizenga writes that using the pronoun "She" to refer to God causes her to feel included and unique, aspects involved in the idea of being significant. "Over time, I gained a new vision of God and myself. I am not forsaken, but included. I am not a generic man, but a unique woman of God."<sup>29</sup> Virginia Mollenkott writes that through using female symbols, (and other symbols) for God which are not equated with "men, whites, the rich," etc.,

... I have been encouraged to face and claim the dark, poor, and powerless places within my own being -- places that God also loves -- and thus to be charged with the energy that comes from progress toward inner wholeness.<sup>30</sup>

Several responses indicated that the use of female symbols for God were associated with a sense of personal capability and success, two other specified aspects of

self-esteem. Reports indicated that the women gained a sense of strength, authority, and power when they used female symbols for God. WB reports that the use of these symbols "... has made me feel more significant and gifted and therefore more powerful.... It has strengthened my resolve that God's vision for the world is of shalom -- peace and justice." MH writes that female God-symbols make her realize that "authority lies in women of the church as well as men." For MM. the use of the female symbols "... means that I have a calling to open up the limitations the Church has put on God." AH says, "It opened up new parts of myself. I can be like God in many more ways, can aspire to more of God's qualities: powerful, loving, caring, strong, right, active, serving." Virginia Ramey Mollenkott perhaps sums up the feelings expressed by many of the women in the survey when she states: "It's empowering to think of oneself as in the image of the Divine."<sup>31</sup>

Because psychologists link low self-esteem with a feeling of alienation, this was also considered by the author as a factor in assessing the influence of symbols these women employ. The connection of male God-symbols with a sense of alienation has been noted earlier in this chapter in discussing the symbols of Mother and birth symbols for God. Female symbols were reported to bring about feelings of joy, affirmation, and closeness to God, whereas masculine symbols were felt as less caring, less

forgiving, and it was reported that they established more of a distance between the women and God. Female symbols made the women feel "included" in contrast to being "excluded" by male symbols. Responses to a question regarding how these women felt in worship services involving only male symbolism and male clergy included the following comments: "angry," "excluded," "despair," "rejected," "hurt," "invisible," "like I, or women in general are not important, nor are 'feminine' qualities," "left out," "weary," "very uncomfortable," "disappointed." DH summarizes her feelings as follows: "Because my awareness has grown in the last few years, I feel really frustrated and angry when I attend such a service. The male imagery begins to leap out at me and sometimes in my anger I miss the message trying to be conveyed."

Poet Ann Price also articulates the strong feelings associated with male God-symbolism in her poem, Our Father, when she writes:

I have prayed/ "Our Father"/ too long/  
the words stick/ somewhere between/ my  
throat and/ soul

I have plowed through liturgy/ thick  
with brotherhood

I have sung hymns/ that challenge the  
sons/ and praise the patriarchs

God is he/ Son is he/ Spirit is he/  
I stand/ sit/ work and/ breathe/  
within this church/ and cannot have/  
the words bombard me/ anymore  
I have prayed/ "Our Father"/  
for too/ long 32

Two authors who write about their experiences in worship services dominated by male symbolism for both humanity and God indicate the emotional effects that this symbolism may bring about. Audrey De La Martre writes:

Last Sunday, during the reading of the Creed, I sat down abruptly. I had come to the end of my endurance. I could no longer deny my reality as a woman and become an honorary man for the purpose of worship. I could no longer pretend that these mental gymnastics of gender switching didn't exhaust me and send me home from church, not renewed, but needing another week to gain enough strength to endure the process again.... Maybe one day I'll leave. Maybe last Sunday's realization was the beginning of the separation process. Pain doesn't enhance worship, and I'm not self-destructive.<sup>33</sup>

Sharon Neufer-Emswiler describes a similar experience in a worship service which culminated in the celebration of the Eucharist:

By this point in the service I am feeling extremely uneasy, almost as though I am suffocating. I want very much for the hour to come to an end so that I can run to the door and breathe the fresh air. Then I will know once again that I do exist, that I am alive, that I am not invisible.

When the worship hour is concluded I leave the church wondering, "Why am I going away feeling less human than when I came?"<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to the above negative reactions to the use of solely male symbolism for God, this chapter has documented that the women of this study report the use of

female symbols for God makes them feel happy, significant, worthy, and closer to God. Often the term "affirmed" is used. In short, they report that their self-esteem is positively influenced by the use of feminine God-symbols. All ten women in this survey have achieved a high level of education: three are ordained ministers or priests in the United and Anglican Churches of Canada; three have partially completed a university degree, seven have graduate degrees. The authors who wrote autobiographical material included in this study are often equally well-educated. As members of Twentieth Century North American Christian churches these women know intellectually that God is not literally male, yet the pain they experience when only male symbols for God are used in their worship services is obvious from their reports. Equally obvious is their positive reaction to female God-symbolism. Their reports indicate that the use of female God-symbols influences their self-esteem.

The question that naturally arises from these findings is, "Why would this be so?" What specific role do symbols for God play in relation to these women's self-esteem? The following chapter will present one psychologist's answers to these questions. C. G. Jung's theory of how symbols function will be applied to this data to provide an explanation of how female symbols for God function to influence self-esteem for these women.

Footnotes to Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup>Sharon Neuffer Emswiler and Thomas Neuffer Emswiler, Women and Worship, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1984), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Meinrad Craighead, "Immanent Mother," in Mary E. Giles, ed., The Feminist Mystic, (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 72.

<sup>4</sup>Lorna Hochstein, "A Massive Contradiction," Daughters of Sarah, 9, No. 3 (May/June, 1983), 6.

<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth A. Johnson proposes that theological statements about Mary carry the symbolic meaning of reference to the church, "... speech about Mary is, in the end, speech about redeemed humanity." See Elizabeth A. Johnson, "The Symbolic Character of Theological Statements About Mary," Journal of Ecumenical Studies, XXII, No. 2, (Spring, 1985), 312-336.

<sup>6</sup>Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, The Naming of God, (Tape), (Seattle: Evangelical Women's Caucus, July, 1982).

<sup>7</sup>Julie Cadwallader-Staub, "Pregnancy and the Reign of God," Daughters of Sarah, 12, No. 1 (January/February, 1986), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>Craighead, Immanent Mother, p. 83.

<sup>9</sup>Reta Finger, "Fugue and Counterpoint", Daughters of Sarah, 11, No. 2 (March/April, 1985), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>Sheryl Lee Olsen, "So Now...", Daughters of Sarah, 8, No. 2 (March/April, 1982), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>Patricia Broughton, "Dressing the Deity," Daughters of Sarah, 8, No. 2 (March/April, 1982), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup>Mollenkott, The Naming of God (Tape), in reference to Phyllis Tribble, God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 61.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., (Tape).

<sup>14</sup>Candace Waldron, "A Daughter's Journey Home," Daughters of Sarah, 9, No. 5 (September/October, 1983), p. 6.

<sup>15</sup>Cadwallader-Staub, "Pregnancy and the Reign of God," p. 10.

<sup>16</sup>Craighead, "Immanent Mother," p. 72. Christine Donald has written a poem about the Venus of Willendorf, emphasizing the emotional effect that a personal identification with this chunky female image may have for women today. It has not been included in the body of this essay because it cannot be considered as an autobiographical statement, but it is interesting to note that the author views physical sameness as a factor in bringing about empathy between a modern day woman and an ancient goddess:

The Venus of Willendorf

The Venus of Willendorf  
Projected in colour on a vast wall  
Commands space, attention, reverence.  
The fat woman sits open-mouthed and quite still.  
The figure stands on legs that dwindle to a point  
As surely as though her huge belly and breasts,  
Her centre of gravity, keep her upright, stable.  
Does she ever sway? Slightly? At all?  
She is a goddess,  
No pushing her about.  
She is nature,  
No arguing with her.  
"Oh" the fat woman cries in wonder, "oh."

The fat woman goes to the goddess.  
The goddess is small enough to hold in the palm of one hand.  
She is a tiny image, a life-size woman, an enormous goddess.  
"Her belly is the shape of mine,  
My breasts resemble hers,  
My heart goes out to her."  
The fat woman is nearly crying.  
She pleads with the goddess  
But the goddess is not of flesh,  
She partakes of massive stone  
And she speaks no words.

Christine Donald, "The Venus of Willendorf," Canadian Woman Studies, 5, No. 2 (Winter, 1983), p. 61.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>19</sup>Corinne Peterson, "Another Look at the Goddess Issue: Reactions and Re-Reactions," Daughters of Sarah, 10, No. 3 (May/June, 1984), p. 23. In the Revelations of Julien of Norwich, a mystic of the Middle Ages, Jesus is called "our true Mother." See Madonna Kohlbenschlag, Kiss



Sleeping Beauty Good-bye, (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), pp. 172-173.

<sup>20</sup> Anonymous, "By His Wounds You Have Been Healed," Canadian Woman Studies, 5, No. 2 (Winter, 1983), p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Mollenkott, The Naming of God, (Tape) and Speech, Silence, Action!, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), pp. 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., (Tape).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., (Tape). Mollenkott further comments that "Jack Rogers, who teaches theology at Fuller Seminary says that in the Hebrew Scriptures God is depicted as present and acting in this world through six terms which are all feminine in gender in Hebrew. I don't think this is accidental: Chokmah, wisdom; Torah, teaching; Shekinah, God's dwelling presence; Bat Kol, the voice of God; Ruah, spirit; and Rehem, mercy or compassion, possibly translated as womb-love." For a more complete analysis of these terms, see Mollenkott's The Divine Feminine, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> Patricia Park, "Women and Liturgy," in Judith L. Weidman, ed., Women Ministers, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1985), p. 79.

<sup>25</sup> Mollenkott, The Naming of God, (Tape).

<sup>26</sup> Finger, "Fugue and Counterpoint," p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Anna J. Beatty, "The Red Witch," Daughters of Sarah, 9, No. 5 (September/October, 1983), p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Olsen, "So Now...".

<sup>29</sup> Annette B. Huizenga, "The Limitations of Language," Daughters of Sarah, 11, No. 1 (January/February, 1985), p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, "God-In-Here-And-Everywhere," Daughters of Sarah, 11, No. 2, (March/April, 1985), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Mollenkott, The Naming of God, (Tape).

<sup>32</sup> Ann Price, "Our Father," Daughters of Sarah, 8, No. 2 (March/April, 1982), p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> Audrey De La Marte, "No Longer an 'Honorary Man'," Daughters of Sarah, 9, No. 3 (May/June, 1983), pp. 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> Emswiler, Women and Worship, p. 3.

### CHAPTER 3

Jung writes that "... language, in its origin and essence, is simply a system of signs or symbols that denote real occurrences or their echo in the human soul."<sup>1</sup> The previous chapter has documented the importance that female words or symbols for God hold for the group of women under discussion, particularly in relation to their self-esteem. Jung's theory that individual words or phrases may be "symbols" which mediate between the conscious and unconscious components of an individual psyche provides a key to understanding why the use of feminine God-symbolism has the psychological effect reported by these women.<sup>2</sup> In order to understand how Jung's system of thought may be applied to the question under discussion, the primary principles of his theory as it involves symbolism will be summarized. Then, building on that general outline, his ideas will be discussed in greater detail as they are applied to the data presented in Chapter Two.

Jung's psychological theory of how symbols function is grounded on the premise that the human psyche consists of the totality of all psychic processes, both conscious and unconscious. Consciousness consists of everything of which an individual has awareness. The unconscious consists of two aspects: a personal unconscious and a collective unconscious. The personal unconscious consists

of everything an individual has forgotten, repressed, or subliminally perceived. The collective unconscious contains, in Jung's words, "... qualities that are not individually acquired but are inherited, ... the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution born anew in the brain structure of every individual."<sup>3</sup> Dreams represent the content of the unconscious in symbolic form.<sup>4</sup>

Jung viewed humanity's major problem to be the disunity of the psyche due to a split between the conscious and the unconscious in each individual. He believed there is an over-emphasis on consciousness in the modern age and a corresponding neglect of the unconscious. His analysis of the problem may be summarized as follows: Consciousness is concerned with adapting to outward reality, but the unconscious exerts its "power of compensation" to supply a reaction from within based on its own content of humanity's cumulative experience. In contrast to consciousness' adaptation to outer reality, this reaction is in keeping with the laws and necessities of humanity's inner life or reality.<sup>5</sup> If the contents of both consciousness and the unconscious were to be acknowledged by the individual, the totality of the psyche would be utilized in shaping opinions and attitudes. This seldom occurs. Instead, the collective unconscious, which has a purposiveness of its own directed toward the completeness and wholeness of the psyche, continually strives to lead conscious processes back into the "old

paths" inherited from our earliest ancestors.<sup>6</sup> This is a threat to consciousness because consciousness has an instinctive fear of losing its freedom to the automation of the unconscious psyche which is its matrix. Consciousness, because it is directed toward outward reality, concurrently seeks to inhibit or censor material from the unconscious.<sup>7</sup> As rational consciousness has become increasingly emphasized particularly in western cultures, the unconscious aspect of the psyche has been ignored. Failure to recognize this unconscious aspect of the psyche results in a repression of the contents of the unconscious, or in a projection of the contents of the unconscious onto someone else. The goal of Jung's psychology is to heal the split between the conscious and the unconscious aspect of the psyche, bringing both aspects together in a workable relationship to create wholeness. This process of uniting consciousness with the unconscious is termed "individuation". Jung writes that "individuation means becoming an 'individual,' and, insofar as 'individuality' embraces an innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could, therefore, translate individuation as coming to 'selfhood' or 'self-realization'."<sup>8</sup> It is in this process of individuation that symbols play such a crucial role.

Symbols are important because they act as transformers of psychic energy (libido) between consciousness and the unconscious and vice-versa.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to

signs, which act as merely substitutes for or representations of something else, symbols go beyond this function to represent something that cannot be expressed by rational concepts.<sup>10</sup> Many things can function symbolically: plants, animals, the sun or moon, geometrical designs, colours, sounds, and words. Words which are symbols for God are of particular interest in this thesis. Christ's use of the term "kingdom of Heaven" is cited by Jung as an example of words which function in a symbolic manner. He calls this a genuine and true symbol because the phrase is an attempt "... to express something for which no verbal concept yet exists."<sup>11</sup> Jacobi notes that the German word for symbol, Sinnbild, carries the Jungian definition within itself: Sinn, or meaning, pertains to the rational or conscious sphere; Bild, or image, belongs to the irrational or unconscious sphere.<sup>12</sup> Because it partakes of both the conscious and the unconscious parts of the psyche, a symbol is able to represent and also influence antithetical and complex psychic situations. Whether a word functions as a sign or a symbol will vary from one individual to another. Even within the experience of one person, different attitudes of consciousness will affect whether particular words are perceived as symbols or as signs. It is important to note that words can gain or lose symbolic meaning. The words, "The Cross," became a symbol for early Christianity, but degenerated into a sign for many people today. If "the

cross" merely signifies a piece of Christian architecture, a grave, or a piece of jewellery, it has become a "dead symbol" or sign. If there is no hidden meaning to the term "The Cross" it is no longer an authentic symbol for that individual. The criterion words must meet in order to be classified as symbols is that they must participate in both the conscious and the unconscious, for it is this capacity for participation in both components of the psyche which gives them their particular power. Symbols act to facilitate the unity of the psyche by interacting with the specific contents of the unconscious which Jung termed the "archetypes."

Archetypes are "... inherited dispositions to react in the same way people have always reacted."<sup>13</sup> They are not actual ideas or images, but could more accurately be described as primordial "patterns" or "motifs" of human behaviour.<sup>14</sup> As well as being transmitted by tradition, they have been inherited down through the millennia of human evolution in a manner similar to the instincts and exist in the unconscious of each individual. The hereditary factor of archetypes is important because it means that, as Jung explains, "... even complicated archetypal images can be reproduced spontaneously without there being any possibility of direct tradition."<sup>15</sup> Although Jung does not postulate a specific number of archetypes, it is thought that their number cannot be unlimited since they correspond to the number of

fundamental experiences shared by humanity over aeons. Each person will experience an archetype in a personally unique way because of her or his genetic inheritance or cultural surroundings, but the archetype, or pattern, itself is universal. One example of an archetype is that of a "redeemer figure" which can be represented by a hare, a bird, a human being, etc. Jung says "The names matter little; everything depends on the connections between them."<sup>16</sup> Jung writes of the importance of archetypes to modern humanity:

Archetypes...were, and still are, living psychic forces that demand to be taken seriously, and they have a strange way of making sure of their effect. Always they were the bringers of protection and salvation, and their violation has as its consequences the "perils of the soul," known to us from the psychology of primitives. Moreover, they are the unfailing causes of neurotic and even psychotic disorders, behaving exactly like neglected or maltreated physical organs or organic functional systems.<sup>17</sup>

Jung emphasizes that symbols are not simply passive, rather they autonomously and energetically exist, seeking to influence consciousness even if ignored by the conscious mind.<sup>18</sup> Archetypes, through their "numen," or specific energy, are able to attract out of consciousness "... those contents which are best suited to themselves."<sup>19</sup> Those contents can be symbols or words which act to create symbols. Words act as transformers of psychic energy from the unconscious to consciousness when

they are symbols which are grounded in the unconscious archetype.<sup>20</sup> Symbols thus have the necessary function of linking the archetypes of the unconscious to consciousness so that psychic unity is possible. Jung calls symbols "bridges" because they bring about this unification or integration of the psyche.

When words function as symbols in the process of individuation, activating the contents of the unconscious and bringing the archetypal image to consciousness, four psychic functions are involved: "Sensation" provides the hearing or seeing of the word and its reference which acts as the symbol for the archetype. "Intuiting" tracks down the archetype's inherent potentialities and engages the archetype, "Thinking" brings rational awareness and an evaluation of the individuating archetype and "Feeling" evaluates it in its degree of pleasantness or unpleasantness.<sup>21</sup> Generally a person only makes adequate use of one function and the other three are not used adequately. Psychic wholeness would consist in fully employing all four functions and raising all archetypes to consciousness, but this is not possible in practice, as Jung explains: "For no man can clarify all the darkness within him, to do so would be to cast off the last earthly vestige."<sup>22</sup>

The life task of each individual is to strive for an awareness and integration of all aspects of the psyche so that the psyche becomes no longer divided and the



opposition of "conscious versus unconscious" is held in balance. In Jung's thought, opposition is a necessary law inherent in human nature, for

... the psyche is ... a self-regulating system. There is no balance, no system of self-regulation, without opposition .... Energy necessarily depends on a pre-existing polarity, without which there could be no energy.<sup>23</sup>

Examples of some opposites present within each person's psyche are dark/light, male/female, and good/evil. Recognizing these opposites and bringing them into harmony is the goal of each individual's life. Jung's investigation of Eastern religious thought contributed to his interest in the search for a uniting archetype in the unconscious which would bring about this harmony.<sup>24</sup> From his study of both Eastern and Western religious thought he concluded that within each person there is a capacity for a relationship to God. This is also understood as the Archetype of the "God image." Jung's theory of the God archetype was intended as neither a denial nor an affirmation of the existence of God as understood in Christian terms. He was concerned with documenting and describing the existence of a God archetype, or pattern, in the human psyche, not with proving the existence of a God who corresponded to the archetype.<sup>25</sup> This archetype can be called either "God" or "Self." Jung explains:

To the Indian it is clear that the self as the originating ground of the psyche is not different from God, and

that, so far as a man is in the self,  
he is not only contained in God, but  
actually is God.<sup>26</sup>

The Self/God is the central archetype and expresses psychic wholeness and totality because it represents the union of opposites present within each psyche. The Self/God is thus the most important archetype to be made conscious because it integrates the entire personality, solving the problem of the individual's relation to both outward and inner reality.<sup>27</sup>

The ego, that part of the psyche which is the centre and subject of consciousness, mediates all our experiences of the outer and inner world. The ego, however, cannot be the center of the entire psyche because it cannot include the collective unconscious. Since the Self does include both the conscious and the unconscious, the realization of the Self means that the psychic centre of the individual is shifted from the ego to a midpoint which is common to both of the psychic systems.<sup>28</sup> The Self acts as a magnet to the incongruous elements of the personality and processes of the unconscious, uniting all opposing elements.<sup>29</sup> The Self or God archetype embraces both consciousness and unconsciousness and the ego then senses itself not as subject but as object of a superordinate subject -- the Self/God. Jung noted that in both Eastern and Western religions the goal of devotional practice is the same: "The shifting of the centre of gravity from ego to the self, from man to God. This means that the ego

disappears in the self, and the man in God."<sup>30</sup> To achieve realization of the Self/God is each individual's goal because it represents not only the integration of the individual's own psyche, but the integration of the individual into the whole of humanity's collective unconscious. This is not simply a form of "universal consciousness" (which Jung understood as only another name for the unconscious), rather it is an awareness of one's own uniqueness plus an awareness of one's relationship with all of the rest of life.<sup>31</sup>

Before the Self/God archetype can be realized, several major archetypes must progressively be raised to consciousness. Although the form and manifestation of these archetypes varies with the individual, certain primary archetypes are involved in the individuation process.<sup>32</sup> The first stage in the individuation process involves realizing the "Shadow," and differentiating the Shadow of the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. This archetype represents the "dark side" of one's psyche. As do all archetypes, the Shadow can have both negative and positive qualities. The Shadow often consists of negative qualities or traits of the personal and collective unconscious, but sometimes consists of helpful qualities which are simply not recognized by consciousness. The next archetypal figures to arise are the "animus and anima," representing for each individual the contrasexual components of his or her psyche. The

anima represents what are termed "feminine" traits in a male. The animus represents what are termed "male" traits in a female. The archetypes of "Spirit" and "Matter" are next to be realized. Spirit may be symbolized by the Wise Old Man symbol in a male's psyche; Matter or "Magna Mater" in the female's individuation process is represented by the symbol of the Great Earth Mother. Jung calls these archetypal figures "mana personalities" because they have extra-ordinary power and lead to the realization of the Self/God, the goal of the entire individuation process.

It is this powerful archetypal figure of the Great Mother and its connection to the archetype of the Self/God which provides an explanation of why the use of female God-symbols were linked to positive feelings of self-esteem by the women in the case study described previously. Based on Jung's theory of the interaction of symbols and archetypes in the process of individuation outlined above, a description of the specific function of symbols which represent the Mother and Self/God archetypes will now be undertaken in relation to the data of Chapter Two.

One important fact must be noted before entering into a description of the correspondence between the symbols used in the case study and Jung's description of Great Mother symbolism: Jung explains that, as often happens with archetypes, over time the opposites always present in an archetypal image are split apart, resulting, for

example, in the occurrence of a good God and evil Devil as found within Christianity. With regard to the Goddess or Great Mother, this split resulted in a benevolent Goddess and a malevolent Goddess.<sup>33</sup> Since the data of Chapter Two indicates that the women involved in this study associate only positive or helpful qualities with the Great Mother archetype, according to Jung's theory this division has occurred for the women in the study as well. No negative imagery or anything that would be considered as belonging to the "darker" side of the Great Mother archetype emerged from their reports. Evil symbols for the mother archetype as described by Jung include the witch, dragon, serpent, grave, tomb, deep water, death, and terrifying apparitions.)<sup>34</sup> By symbolizing God (female) only in positive terms, Jung would contend that these women perpetuate traditional Christianity's error of failing to realize a God archetype that has both positive and negative aspects. This means that the existence of evil, which must be accounted for in some way, becomes projected unto something else, i.e., either the devil or humanity itself.<sup>35</sup> Because "The self is defined psychologically as the psychic totality of the individual,"<sup>36</sup> the realization of the Self archetype must include all opposites. Theoretically, therefore, the archetype of the Great Mother, if it is to function as a uniting archetype resulting in the realization of the Self, must include negative as well as positive aspects. Since the data

indicates that this archetype does not carry any negative aspects for these women, it must be concluded that the solely positive symbolism for the archetype of the Great Mother is as deficient in this respect as is the symbolism of God as benevolent Father. However, Jung admits that the "symbol for the self is not always as total as the definition would require," because anything a person postulates as being a greater totality than herself can become a symbol of the Self.<sup>37</sup> Even the Christ figure, which Jung recognizes as a symbol of the Self, is not a totality, because it lacks sin or the dark side of the psyche.<sup>38</sup> In order to be a perfect symbol of the Self all opposites of the psyche would need to be included.

Jung believed that in the Christian context, the symbol of the Trinity was made more complete by Pope Pius the Twelfth's proclamation in 1950 of the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven. This, Jung believed, brought the needed addition of opposites into Christian God-symbolism: Mary represented the feminine and material qualities which were needed in addition to the purely masculine and spiritual properties of the Trinity symbolism.<sup>39</sup> In the resulting Quaternity, evil is also represented because of its identification with matter.<sup>40</sup> Because the women in this survey did not list Mary as a symbol for God, Jung's comments regarding the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary cannot be directly applied to their use of female God symbols. However, it

must be noted that these women reported that female God-symbols are not the only symbols they use. Naturally, they are surrounded in their churches by masculine God-symbolism. Therefore, when they add their female God-symbolism to male God-symbolism they are including at least one opposite not generally found in Christianity--God is male/female. An intriguing question can be asked here: when these women symbolize God as male and report feelings of alienation, etc., is there a sense in which their negative feelings indicate some negative qualities being ascribed to a masculine God?

The Great Mother archetype is considered by Jung to be a derivative of the more general "Mother" archetype. The "Mother" is represented by a great variety of symbols, or images.<sup>41</sup> The positive images may include the personal mother; female ancestors; the Virgin Mary; Sophia; goddesses; things representing the human longing for redemption (The Kingdom of God and the heavenly Jerusalem); things arousing devotion or awe (i.e., the Church, the moon), things or places related to fertility (i.e., plowed fields); the tree of life and in Christianity, the Cross; helpful animals; hollow objects like vases, caves, deep wells, baptismal fonts, flowers; the sea; and the uterus or anything shaped like it. As well, Jung notes, "Because of the protection it implies, the magic circle, or mandala can be a form of the mother archetype."<sup>42</sup> Jung believed that mandalas (circular

designs which people of all times and of all cultures have created) most adequately symbolize the Self because they can incorporate opposites such as light/dark, male/female, round/square, etc.<sup>43</sup> The mandala is an expression of the reconciliation of the opposites of the psyche. Several of the symbols which appear in Jung's description of the Mother archetype also appear in a somewhat modified form in the data of Chapter Two. These are: the Goddess, Sophia (Wisdom), uterus imagery (i.e., birth imagery), and water.

The symbolism for the "Great Mother" as Goddess in the collected data is not as obvious as are the symbols representing Her before the Christian era.<sup>44</sup> Although one would expect that a female God would be called "Goddess," in fact all ten respondents to the survey replied negatively to the question asking if they ever referred to God as "Goddess." However, they all stated that they used female symbols for God at least some of the time, either in thought or word. (Notable exceptions to this aversion to using the symbol "Goddess" appear in the autobiographical material of Anna J. Beatty and Meinrad Craighead's account of her Mothergod as symbolized by the Goddess, the Venus of Willendorf.<sup>45</sup> This will be discussed further in this chapter.) The general reasons respondents gave for not using the term "Goddess" were that "God" to them was a non-gender word, that "Goddess" brought to mind pagan worship, and that "Goddess" suggested a diminution of



"God" and was therefore not acceptable as a female term for God.

The avoidance of the actual term, "Goddess," however, does not mean that it is not the Goddess or Great Mother archetype being symbolized by these women's words for God. As Jung states of archetypes, "... their names mean very little, whereas the way they are related to you is all important."<sup>46</sup> The importance of the symbol for these women appears to be its gender. Recalling that Jung maintains that the content of an archetype is determined by or filled out with the material of conscious experience, it becomes understandable that these women's conscious understanding of the term "Goddess" does not allow them to connect this symbol to their concept of God.<sup>47</sup> However, their specific terms and descriptions indicate that it is the same ancient archetypal structure of the Goddess or Great Mother which is being raised to consciousness by their use of female God symbolism. As will be demonstrated, there is a close correspondence between the symbols for the Great Mother as described by Jung and the female symbols for God used by these women.

A comparison of Jung's description of the major positive features of the Mother archetype and these women's symbolism for God demonstrates this correspondence as follows: Jung states that the helpful qualities associated with the Mother archetype are:

... maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign; all that fosters growth and fertility. The place of magic transformation and rebirth ... are presided over by the Mother.<sup>48</sup>

These qualities were present in the descriptions of Chapter Two. The women's major symbolism of God as "mother" who gives birth, nurtures and is identified with women's own pregnancy, is related to Jung's concept of the Mother as a fosterer of growth and fertility. Anna J. Beatty called God "The Mother of Life."<sup>49</sup> As well, these women reported that symbolizing God as female was connected to feelings of being cared for, included and "closer" to a compassionate God, suggesting Jung's terms describing the Mother who "cherishes and sustains." Two respondents listed "Sustainer" as a symbol they used to refer to God. The women also expressed the feeling that this God understood them. This feeling corresponds to the maternal solicitude and sympathy qualities Jung describes. The Wisdom Jung mentions was directly noted in several women's reports as well, and Mollenkott linked Wisdom to Christ, the Logos.<sup>50</sup> The description of strong, positive emotions experienced when using female God symbols was a common theme of their reports, suggesting Jung's description of "spiritual exaltation" and "magic transformation." As documented in Chapter Two, a sense of strength, authority and power was experienced when they used female

symbols for God. This sense of power is also listed as an attribute of the Earth Mother:

The Earth Mother plays an important part in the woman's unconscious, for all her manifestations are described as "powerful." This shows that in such cases the Earth Mother element in the conscious mind is abnormally weak and requires strengthening.<sup>51</sup>

As noted previously, the only actual pictorial image of God described in this case study is provided by Meinrad Craighead, who, when she was seven years old experienced God as "Mother" and soon thereafter happened to view a picture of the figure of the Venus of Willendorf.<sup>52</sup> The recognition of this figure as being her Mothergod was instantaneous. Jung refers to this stout goddess also, explaining that she represents a frequent expression of the Earth Mother.<sup>53</sup> As well, he mentions that the symbol of breasts, or "multiple breasts" is also occasionally encountered and this brings to mind Virginia Mollenkott's emphasis on the "breasted God," as well as Christ imaged as female, i.e., with breasts, especially by Corinne Peterson.<sup>54</sup>

With regard to water as a symbol for the Great Mother, it should be noted that in Craighead's account water is connected to the symbol of the Venus of Willendorf as an important part of Craighead's visionary experience. As well, Reta Finger writes of the "Water of Life" swirling into a bathtub in connection with the use of female God symbolism. One respondent to the

questionnaire listed "Water of Life" as a term for God. Jung describes "water" as a symbol of the Mother and cites evidence from such diverse sources as Greek mythology and the Vedas to indicate that "... the maternal significance of water is one of the clearest interpretations of symbols in the whole field of mythology."<sup>55</sup> Baptismal water in Christianity is an example of how the projection of the mother image upon water gives to the water the Mother's numinous or magical qualities, in this case, rebirth.<sup>56</sup> Jung understood the sea, or large expanses of water as a symbol for the unconscious. Craighead's vision of the Venus of Willendorf rising from the water could therefore be interpreted as the rising of the Mother archetype from the unconscious.<sup>57</sup> Reta Finger's association of ordinary tap water with the "Water of Life" suggests the connection with this maternal archetype as well.<sup>58</sup>

Although it is never explicitly stated in the survey material, using female symbolism for both God and Christ logically results in a Mother-Daughter relationship rather than the Father-son relationship of those two members of the traditional Christian Trinity. Jung's analysis of the Demeter-Kore (or Persephone) myth discusses the symbols of Mother-Daughter goddesses in a unity.<sup>59</sup> He describes several cases of this symbolism from his own psychological practice. He states that this Mother-Daughter symbolism belongs to the type of "supraordinate personality," or the Self.<sup>60</sup> Because female imagery of this sort represents

not the Self, but the Anima in males, Jung states that these figures present something of a practical problem in the psychology of the unconscious. For the female, however, he believes Mother-Daughter symbolism is a symbol of the Self with all the positive results accruing from its use, i.e., the unity of the psyche. He states:

It is immediately clear what cathartic and at the same time rejuvenating effects must flow from the Demeter cult into the feminine psyche, and what a lack of psychic hygiene characterizes our culture which no longer knows the kind of wholesome experience afforded by the Eleusinian emotion.<sup>61</sup>

Jung sees the Demeter-Kore symbolism as most helpful to females and not as significant for males because:

... Demeter-Kore exists on the plane of Mother-Daughter experience, which is alien to man and shuts him out. In fact, the psychology of the Demeter cult bears all the features of a matriarchal order of society, where the man is an indispensable but on the whole disturbing factor.<sup>62</sup>

The significance of the Demeter-Kore (Mother-Daughter) symbolism for divinity and of the several female symbols described above lies primarily in the fact that this type of symbolism is representative of the "mana personality" for women, which can be a uniting symbol facilitating the realization of the Self/God archetype. Because of the very nature of archetypes it is not to be expected that the images or symbolism will be exactly the same for each individual, however. In describing the

symbolism of The Great Mother, it is important to remember that archetypes are primordial "patterns" of human behaviour and are not to be thought of as actual ideas or images.<sup>63</sup> However, when the archetype comes into consciousness through the action of a symbol, it presents itself as an idea or image, "... like everything else that becomes a content of consciousness."<sup>64</sup> Jung is insistent that archetypes are not to be treated as mere names or philosophical concepts, or as parts of a mechanical system that can be learned by rote.<sup>65</sup> He describes the quality of archetypes as follows:

Clearcut distinctions and strict formulations are quite impossible in this field, seeing that a kind of fluid interpenetration belongs to the very nature of all archetypes.... No archetype can be reduced to a simple formula. It is a vessel which we can never empty, and never fill. It has a potential existence only, and when it takes shape in matter it is no longer what it was. It persists through the ages and requires interpreting ever anew. The archetypes are the imperishable elements of the unconscious, but they change their shape continually.<sup>66</sup>

Having sketched in rather broad strokes the symbols of the archetype of the Great Mother, (which has perhaps changed its shape as Jung suggests above), Jung's theory of how these symbols actually function can now be discussed.

The symbolism of the Great Mother represents for females "... the innermost essence of the psyche ... back

to its source; back to the primordial image from which it was formed."<sup>67</sup> This type of symbolism is utilized in the last stage of the individuation process, and these symbols are considered "uniting symbols" because they are the symbols most closely related to the Self. The conscious realization of the contents of this Great Mother archetype brings with it a sense of liberation. This can be explained as liberation from the "Mother" because it carries with it a feeling of one's own true individuality. (The reader will note that the women of this study generally described a feeling of "uniqueness" and a growth in "a sense of personal identity.") Jung explains that this liberation consists of a separation from carnal or animal parents and rebirth into a condition of immortality, as symbolized in Christian baptism, for example.<sup>68</sup> This conscious realization of the Great Mother archetype brings with it a danger of becoming arrogant if the powers and attributes of the archetype are taken as belonging to the ego. Jacobi notes that "everyone succumbs to this for a while in the course of a deliberately deepened individuation process."<sup>69</sup> At this stage, Jung's warning against the danger of "concretizing" the mana personality into an extramundane "Father in Heaven," or in the case under discussion, "Mother in Heaven," is important.<sup>70</sup> To "concretize" God results in the projection of evil unto the devil and good unto God. Since all that is good is attributed to the God in Heaven, to "concretize" God can

also result in the individual assessing herself as "a miserable, inferior, worthless, and sinful little heap of humanity."<sup>71</sup> The data indicates that this effect was not experienced by the women surveyed. Instead, they report that heightened self-esteem was connected with their use of female God-symbols. In their case, the "dissolution of the mana personality through conscious assimilation of its contents" led to the realization of the Self/God archetype and a resultant positive sense of self-esteem.<sup>72</sup> The valuable insights gained from consciously recognizing the contents of the Mother archetype can be utilized positively when the woman distinguishes her ego from those contents.

The reason why these insights can be termed "valuable" is that by raising the contents of the Mother archetype from collective unconsciousness to consciousness (via female God-symbols), the individual has not only a sense of her own personal uniqueness but a sense as well of the collective unconscious.<sup>73</sup> This influx from the unconscious brings about the dissolution of the persona (the "mask" of ourselves we present to others), and reduces the rule of consciousness. This brings about a state of psychic imbalance. However, since the psyche is a self-regulating system, this loss of balance is overcome when consciousness assimilates and elaborates the contents arising from the unconscious. Then the ego senses that it is not really the centre of the psyche, and the Self, or



God, archetype which represents the psychic center -- the psyche held in balance between consciousness and the unconscious -- comes into being. This union of psychic opposites is termed "the transcendent function" and is expressed by the uniting symbol, God the Mother.<sup>74</sup> Paraphrasing Jung, the completion of this process means, "The shifting of the centre of gravity from ego to self, from woman to God. This means that the ego disappears in the Self, and the woman in God."<sup>75</sup>

Applying Jung's theory of individuation directly to the data of Chapter Two, the importance of female God-symbols is readily noted. A composite picture of how these symbols function for the women of this study can be described as follows:<sup>76</sup> The Great Mother archetype exists in the unconscious of all women (and men) and is passed on through centuries of genetic inheritance. The archetype is not merely passively existing in the unconscious but possesses an energy which enables it to appropriate material from consciousness. Traditionally, Christianity has not presented female God-symbols to women's consciousness and so this avenue for realizing the Self through the raising of the Great Mother Archetype has been blocked. This results in psychic tension and imbalance, described by the women when they used only male pronouns for God. They experienced feelings of anger, despair, rejection, hurt, weariness, discomfort, suffocation and frustration. Ann Price said that male words "stick

somewhere between/my throat and soul."<sup>77</sup> In recent years, largely through the influence of the feminist movement, female God symbolism has been made available in the North American Culture. Now, whether through printed or spoken words, or through seeing female Christ-statues or female priests administering the Sacraments, the female God-symbol, which carries with it the ability to participate in these women's consciousness as well as in their unconscious, is present to the senses. Consciousness, through the activity of the psychic function of sensing, now contains female God-symbolism obtained through seeing, hearing, or touching female God symbols. For most of the women of this study, their thinking function rejected the symbol of Goddess, since it was considered of pagan and not Christian origin. However, the use of other female terms for God was acceptable to them, particularly since those terms could be found in the Christian scriptures, albeit sometimes indirectly indicated by metaphorical reference to God as female. The archetype of the unconscious was able to be realized through even indirect symbolism, in some cases. Here the process of intuition acted to connect with the collective unconscious contents of the Great Mother archetype, which all the while was striving to conscious recognition. The function of feeling (evaluating for pleasantness or unpleasantness) was well-described by the respondents who reported that pleasant emotions were

experienced in connection with the use of female God symbols. Since the Great Mother is an archetype of the Self/God, the conscious realization of this archetype brings with it feelings which conform to Jung's description of the realization of the Self:

The self could be characterized as a kind of compensation of the conflict between inside and outside.<sup>78</sup>

The women's responses describing their emotions included expressions of a sense of peace, of wholeness, of being balanced, of affinity -- as if a barrier had been removed. NF's description of her emotions when she first encountered female God-symbols in a worship service resonate with Jung's description of the Self as "our life's goal." NF writes, "I felt like I had come home."

Since it is the symbol of The Great Mother (i.e., female God-symbolism) which has made this entire process possible for the women of this study, the importance of this symbolism cannot be over-rated. The function of the symbol here can be both "expressive" and "impressive."<sup>79</sup> The emergence of the symbol of the Self (in this case God as female) represents or "expresses" the unity of the conscious and unconscious of the psyche. On the other hand, the symbol of God as female can have an "impressive" character when it has become an image or mental picture whose meaning influences psychic processes. In the case study under consideration, the "expressive" character of God-symbolism is evident from the accounts of women who

suddenly recognized God as female, although they may not previously have used female God-symbolism. The "impressive" character of female God symbolism is evident from the accounts of women who consciously and deliberately used female God-symbols. (For example, they changed the words in hymns or the liturgy.) They then experienced God as female. Probably both "impressive" and "expressive" characteristics of symbols would be functioning to some extent in most cases. This, of course, would be in keeping with symbolism's property of functioning in both consciousness and the unconscious of the psyche.

Given the intimate links between the symbol and the Self/God, it should not be thought unusual that the symbol of the Self (i.e., God as female) should engender feelings of increased self-esteem for women. Although Jung stresses that the whole field of mother imagery has not been adequately investigated and that he does not feel confident enough to offer definitive conclusions about it, he does remind the reader that:

... the mother-image in a man's psychology is entirely different in character from a woman's. For a woman, the mother typifies her own conscious life as conditioned by her sex. But for a man the mother typifies something alien, which he has yet to experience and which is filled with the imagery latent in the unconscious. For this reason, if for no other, the mother-image of a man is essentially different from a woman's.

The mother has from the outset a decidedly symbolical significance for a man, which probably accounts for his strong tendency to idealize her. Idealization is a hidden apotropaism; one idealizes whenever there is a secret fear to be exorcized. What is feared is the unconscious and its magical influence.

Whereas for a man the mother is ipso facto symbolical, for a woman she becomes a symbol only in the course of her psychological development ... in a woman the chthonic type, or Earth Mother, is the most frequent. During the manifest phase of the archetype an almost complete identification takes place. A woman can identify directly with the Earth Mother, but a man cannot ... one of the peculiarities of the Great Mother is that she frequently appears paired with her male counterpart. Accordingly the man identifies with the son-lover....<sup>80</sup>

According to Jung's statements above, the strong identification of this study's participants to a God symbolized as female is to be expected.

Jung's discussion of the Trinity is relevant in connection with these women's symbolism of Christ as female. Jung's explanation of Christ's relationship to God (as Father) provides further important clues to understanding why female God-symbols influence these women's self-esteem.<sup>81</sup> Christ is considered by Jung to be a symbol of the Self/God. Here the ancient controversy which resulted in the fourth century formulation of the Nicene Creed is involved.<sup>82</sup> This was the argument of whether Christ is of the same nature (or substance) as God (the Father), homousios, or merely of a "similar nature"

(or substance), homoiousios. Since Christianity settled on Christ as being "of the same nature or substance" as God (the Father), then the realization of the Self (i.e., Christ) archetype in an individual carries with it the meaning that the individual is "of the same nature or substance" as God. (This realization can be fraught with all the ego-inflation dangers described earlier in relation to the mana personality. However, it need not be so, as was also discussed above.)

To think of oneself as of the same nature or substance as God indeed should raise self-esteem as Mollenkott affirmed in Chapter Two: "It is empowering to think of oneself as in the image of the Divine."<sup>83</sup> Jacobi describes this experience of the Self archetype as similar to Meister Eckhart's "little spark," or the Christian idea of the Kingdom of God that is "within you."<sup>84</sup> When the women surveyed symbolize Christ as female (either through representing Christ as embodied in a female body or through connecting Sophia or birth imagery to Christ), they appear to make concrete the "of the same nature or substance" of the Self/Christ with God. Jung says that the symbols of the Self "cannot be distinguished empirically from a God-image."<sup>85</sup> By substituting female terms for male terms in Jung's explanation of the psychological significance of the "same substance," the important function of female symbols as linking women to

the "same substance" of God is more readily noted:  
(Changes to Jung's masculine words are underlined.)

But since, psychologically, Christ  
(female) must be understood as a  
symbol of the self, and the descent of  
the Holy Ghost as the self's  
actualization in woman, it follows  
that the self must represent something  
that is of the substance of the Mother  
too.<sup>86</sup>

The discussion of this chapter shows that Jung's theory regarding symbols supports the thesis that symbols, because of their nature, have the capacity to raise self-esteem. Using his theory, it has been demonstrated that female symbols function to raise self-esteem for the women of this study because female symbols provided a channel for actualizing the Self/God archetype, i.e., a participation or identification with the Divine. This is not an area of study that Jung dealt with in detail. In fact, Jung stated of the symbol of the Great Mother:

The concept itself is of no concern to psychology, because the image of the Great Mother in this form is rarely encountered in practice and then under very special conditions.<sup>87</sup>

However, if one takes into account even the brief treatment Jung does afford this archetype, and if one considers his entire theory of symbolism, it is apparent that the power of Great Mother symbolism is indeed great and it is quite natural for this particular symbol to have an effect on a woman's personality, especially her self-esteem.

Footnotes to Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>C. G. Jung, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, trans. R.F.C.Hull (New York: Crossroads, 1966) 5, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>The psyche is "... the totality of all psychic processes, conscious as well as unconscious." Jolande Jacobi The Psychology of C. G. Jung, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 8, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 7, p. 131.

<sup>5</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 42.

<sup>6</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 8, p. 112, and Jacobi, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 8, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 7, p. 173.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 5, p. 231.

<sup>10</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>13</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 8, p. 111.

<sup>14</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 44.

<sup>15</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 11, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 8, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 9, Part 1, p. 156.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 9, Part 1, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 5, p. 232.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 5, p. 231.

<sup>21</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., pp. 10-18. Jacobi summarizes Jung's theory regarding the four psychic functions on these pages. It is important to note that Thinking and Feeling exist in the psyche in opposition to each other, as do Sensing and Intuiting; and that only one of a pair of opposing functions may be operative at any



one time. This means that although everyone possesses all four functions, one function predominates in the consciousness and the opposite of the predominate function exists in the person's unconscious. It is therefore beyond the control of personal will. The other pair of functions exist partly in consciousness and partly in the unconscious, also in opposition to each other. Of this pair, one function (called the auxiliary function) is often discerned, but its opposite is seldom available to the average person. Jacobi further explains that this is a theoretical model; in actual practice such rigid or one-sided development is seldom encountered.

As well as the four functions, Jung postulates two attitudinal types which indicate the direction psychic energy will flow: The attitude of "extroversion" means that the psyche orients outward to the collective norms of the time. Introversion means an inward orientation guided by subjective factors. These attitudes are biologically determined and exist in a compensatory relationship. If consciousness is extroverted, the unconscious is introverted, and vice-versa, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>24</sup>H. G. Coward, "Jung's Encounter with Yoga," The Journal of Analytical Psychology, 23, No. 4 (1978), 349.

<sup>25</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., pp. 146-147.

<sup>26</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 11, p. 581. The reader will note that in describing Jung's theory the term "Self" is begun with a capital letter. The capitalization of this word will indicate that it is being used in the specifically Jungian sense of the term; i.e., in reference to the Self archetype. In direct quotations from Jung's works, however, the writer has followed his practice of not capitalizing "self."

<sup>27</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 127.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>29</sup>Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, (New York: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 62.

<sup>30</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 11, p. 581.

<sup>31</sup>Fordham, An Introduction ..., p. 63.

<sup>32</sup> Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 109. My description of the archetypes involved in the individuation process is summarized from Jacobi, pp. 107-126. (Many Jungian psychologists today would not propose such a systematic or rigid progression in the individuation process.)

<sup>33</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 9, Part 1, p. 102.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 9, part 1, p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 9, part 1, p. 102 and 5, p. 236.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 11, p. 156.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 11, p. 156.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 11, p. 156.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 9, part 1, pp. 107-110.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 9, part 11, p. 171, also 9, part 1, p. 109.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 9, part 1, p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 9, part 1, p. 81.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 9, part 1, p. 387.

<sup>44</sup> Erich Neumann, The Great Mother, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). This book analyzes this archetype in all of its aspects.

<sup>45</sup> Meinrad Craighead, "Immanent Mother," in Mary E. Giles, ed., The Feminist Mystic (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

<sup>46</sup> C. G. Jung, Man and His Symbols (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1964), p. 88.

<sup>47</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 9, Part 1, p. 79.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 9, Part 1, p. 82.

<sup>49</sup> Anna J. Beatty, "The Red Witch," Daughters of Sarah, 9, No. 5 (September/October, 1983), p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Virginia Ramey Mollekott, The Naming of God (Tape), (Seattle: Evangelical Women's Caucus, July 1982).

<sup>51</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 9, Part 1, p. 186.

<sup>52</sup> Craighead, "Immanent Mother," in Giles, ed. The Feminist Mystic, p. 72.

<sup>53</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 9, Part 1, p. 186.

<sup>54</sup> Corinne Peterson, "Another Look at the Goddess Issue: Reactions and Re-reactions," Daughters of Sarah, 10, No. 3 (May/June, 1984), p. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 5, p. 218.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>58</sup> Reta Finger, "Fugue and Counterpoint," Daughters of Sarah, 11, No. 2 (March/April, 1985), p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 9, Part 1, pp. 182-203. This story can be summarized somewhat as follows: When the Goddess Demeter's daughter, Persephone, was abducted by the god of the underworld, Demeter's grief was so great she neglected the land and no crops grew. Persephone was eventually returned to her mother but required to spend four months of each year in Hades. The winter season resulted from the separation of mother and daughter. The death of vegetation was seen as a demonstration of Demeter's grief at the yearly separation. See "Demeter," Funk and Wagnall's New Encyclopedia.

Although Jung does not mention this fact, Joan Chamberlain Engelsman discusses another interesting feature of the Demeter-Kore myth: the possibility of a female trinity. She writes: "A third significant goddess connected with the Eleusinian mysteries is Hecate. Usually overlooked by analysts of the mysteries, she is nonetheless important. Once a moon goddess, she is now strongly connected with both Demeter and Persephone. First, she accompanies Demeter in her search for her daughter. Second, she reappears after Persephone returns from the underworld and accompanies her from that day forward. Hecate's attachment to the principal goddesses creates a trinity at Eleusis. Harrison indicates that three goddesses frequently develop from two, and in Greece the trinitarian form was exclusively "confined to the women goddesses." See Joan Chamberlain Engelsman, The Feminine Dimension of the Divine (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), p. 57. Since no clear data specifically on terms for the Holy Spirit emerged from the survey material, this aspect of God-symbolism will not be dealt with further in this thesis.

<sup>60</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 9, Part 1, pp. 186-187.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 9, Part 1, p. 188.

- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., 9, Part 1, p. 203.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., 8, p. 111; Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 44.
- <sup>64</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 8, p. 227.
- <sup>65</sup>Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 87.
- <sup>66</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 9, Part 1, p. 179.
- <sup>67</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 125. Jacobi provides a comprehensive description of the individuation process. This analysis draws from her treatment of this process in addition to material from Jung.
- <sup>68</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 7, p. 235.
- <sup>69</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 126.
- <sup>70</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 7, p. 235.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 237.
- <sup>73</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 126.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 135.
- <sup>75</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 11, p. 581.
- <sup>76</sup>Harold Coward, "Mysticism in the Analytical Psychology of Carl Jung and the Yoga Psychology of Patanjali: A Comparative Study." Philosophy East and West, 29, No. 3 (July 1979), pp. 323-336. Coward suggests an outline of the individuation process for the symbol of the Cross in this article.
- <sup>77</sup>Ann Price, "Our Father," Daughters of Sarah, 8, No. 2 (March/April, 1982), p.12.
- <sup>78</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 7, p. 239.
- <sup>79</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 94.
- <sup>80</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 9, Part 1, p. 105.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., 11, pp. 192-200.
- <sup>82</sup>J.N.D. Kelly, "The Nicene Crisis," Early Christian Doctrines, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), pp. 223-247.

<sup>83</sup>Mollenkott, The Naming of God.

<sup>84</sup>Jacobi, Psychology ..., p. 132.

<sup>85</sup>Jung, Collected Works, 11, p. 194.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 9, Part 1, p. 75.

#### CHAPTER 4

Although Jung considered that the concept of the Great Mother was of little concern to psychology because it was rarely encountered in practice, the foregoing study has demonstrated that the archetype of the Great Mother and the symbolism surrounding Her are of importance for at least some Christians today. It is, of course, impossible to predict whether the use of female God-symbols will become more commonplace in Christianity in the future. However, this is a distinct possibility if the secular feminist movement, and the Christian feminist movement in particular continue to grow and to influence the culture and Christianity of North America. It is important, therefore, to seek an understanding of the dynamics involved in the psychological process of symbolizing God as female.

The foregoing chapter has demonstrated that Jungian psychological theory supports the thesis that it is because of the specific nature of symbolism that female symbols for God can have the power to influence women's self-esteem. The major points of his theory in support of this thesis can be stated as follows:

1. The Great Mother archetype exists in the collective unconscious of each individual.
2. For women, this archetype can represent the Self/God.

3. The Self/God archetype stands for the pattern of wholeness or psychic integration of opposites which is the goal of each human life.
4. Symbols are crucial in making possible the raising to consciousness, and also the expressing of the archetype. They enable psychic wholeness.
5. Specific symbols (such as Goddess, God as female, Sophia or Wisdom, birth symbolism and Water) represents the Great Mother. The use of this symbolism can bring about the realization of the Self/God archetype. This results in a whole, healthy psyche.

Since psychologists link emotional health with a sense of positive self-esteem, it is to be expected that gaining a healthy psyche through Jung's process of individuation will naturally carry with it a healthy sense of self-esteem as well.<sup>1</sup>

Just as self-esteem can not be objectively measured, (as discussed in Chapter 1), Jung's theory of individuation and the important function of symbols can not be objectively "proven" to be true. Jung stated that:

... a renewal of personality ... is a subjective state whose reality cannot be validated by any external criterion; any further attempt to describe and explain it is doomed to failure, for only those who have had this experience are in a position to attest its reality .... everything about this psychology is, in the deepest sense, experience; the entire theory, even when it puts on

the most abstract airs, is the direct outcome of something experienced.<sup>2</sup>

Although one cannot "prove" Jung's theory to be true, one can, by drawing on accounts of the personal experiences of human beings, test his theory and evaluate it for its adequacy in explaining why people can experience certain psychological states in connection with different symbols. Particularly in the case under discussion, it is important that Jung's theory be assessed in terms of its adequacy for analyzing the data supplied by Christian feminists. Two questions will be considered: Does his theory adequately account for all of the data presented in this thesis? and, in conjunction with that question, how compatible is a Jungian explanation of God-symbolism with the basic tenets of Christian feminism?

Over all, Jung's theory appears comprehensive of the data. His sensitivity to symbolism makes his theory particularly applicable in analyzing feminist material. Symbols are considered of crucial importance in his theory, and they are considered of crucial importance to the women of this study as well. By postulating both an "impressive" and "expressive" psychological role for symbols, Jung's theory can accommodate the reports that the deliberate use of female God-symbols leads to an increase in self esteem (i.e., the realization of the Great Mother archetype); as well as the reports that a sudden experience of the Great Mother archetype is



represented by a female symbol (i.e, the sudden vision of the Venus of Willendorf). Also, his idea that a variety of symbols can function in relation to the Great Mother archetype agrees with the fact that several symbols for God as female were used. As well, his system allows for the validity of the psychological effect of relatively indirect symbolism. Because archetypes have a somewhat "magnetic" force, they can draw out of consciousness even metaphorical female God-symbolism which is often the type of imagery used by Christian feminists. His concept of the unconscious consisting of both a personal and a collective unconscious agrees with the data: feminine god-imagery can be accounted for as derived unconsciously from the exposure these women have had to indirect feminine imagery which was not always obvious to the conscious mind. An example of this would be the Mother Eagle symbolism in Deuteronomy where the eagle is a metaphor for a female God, although this fact may be obscured to consciousness because translators use neuter or masculine pronouns to refer to the eagle.<sup>3</sup> Since Jung postulates that the Great Mother is a powerful archetype, particularly in the collective unconscious of women, the experience of this archetype when using female god-symbols is normative according to his theory and not at all the anomaly it is for traditional Christianity.

Jung's theory of the actual realization of the Self/God archetype can be viewed as either problematic or

positive in regard to experiences described by the women of this study. In order to understand why this is so, one specific aspect of feminist theology must be briefly discussed. Although there is not a definitive statement of Christian feminist theology any more than there is a definitive statement of Christian theology, there is one major belief that appears in some form or another in most Christian feminist literature. That is the feminist perception of sin. Sin as it relates to females is generally not associated with pride as it is in traditional Christian theology. Instead, for women, it is defined as a lack of center, triviality, diffuseness, fear, dependency on others for self definition, and in general a failure to exercise authority or practice responsible stewardship of the gifts given to one who is made in the image of God.<sup>4</sup> Sin, for females (and men who follow these same types of attitudes and behaviour) does not consist of "self establishment at the cost of relationship," (i.e., pride), but consists of "enmeshment" -- a failure to establish a self identity apart from others.<sup>5</sup> Nancy Wiles Holsey has described a woman suffering from "enmeshment" as follows:

Here is a woman who is everything the church has trained her to be. She is a competent young woman who has thoroughly internalized the church's values. Having read contemporary feminism, she gladly affirms herself as nurturing and relational. And now

this capable caring woman is utterly immobilized. She is unable to make a simple decision on her own -- as though she has no self at her center. She has -- rejected what she has learned is the "male myth" of independence and self-sufficiency. She has affirmed that identity is inseparable from one's relationships to others. But in the process she has assigned such ultimacy to her relationships that her identity -- her beliefs, her emotions, her actions -- has been utterly determined by her family, her friends, and her faith-community. She is, without resistance, what they ask her to be. And she has been for so long that she has no sense of self except for who she is for others. Their perception of her has become her only identity.<sup>6</sup>

One Christian feminist psychologist states the problem as a conflict between self-expression and self-sacrifice.<sup>7</sup> In the data of Chapter Two, Mollenkott expressed a similar condition of powerlessness when she said that she had given away all her power to everything that resembled a male god -- to all the men in her life. Obviously a conflict exists between the Christian feminist and traditional Christian concept of sin and salvation. In traditional Christian theology, salvation means self-surrender, or dying to self, whereas in Christian feminist theology a lack of emphasis on the self is seen as the sin women need to be saved from. In Christian feminism, salvation involves giving the self more, not less, importance.

Jung's theory of realizing the Self/God, particularly where it involves the ego, can be seen as irreconcilable

to feminist theology if the ego is understood to lose its identity and if the individual is of no consequence in a surrender to the Self/God. The writer believes, however, that this would be a misinterpretation of Jung's theory. By "ego" Jung means "... a complex of ideas which constitutes the centre of my field of consciousness and appears to possess a high degree of continuity and identity."<sup>8</sup> He does not teach that the ego is insignificant or that the person is somehow diminished with the realization of the God/Self archetype. Instead, exactly the opposite happens when this archetype is raised to consciousness. The personality is renewed and consciousness is widened, explains Jung.<sup>9</sup> Rather than being confined merely to an ego (which, according to feminist theology is failing to establish its own self-identity and strength), the resources of the entire psyche become available to the woman. Individuation involves the development of each unique individual psyche as a being distinct from the collective psyche of humanity.<sup>10</sup> Jung states that

Any serious check to individuality .. is an artificial stunting of the personal psyche. It is obvious that a social group consisting of stunted individuals cannot be a healthy and viable institution; only a society that can preserve its internal cohesion and collective values, while at the same time granting the individual the greatest possible freedom, has any prospect of enduring vitality.<sup>11</sup>

Jung's theory, therefore, is in close agreement with those feminists who believe that "woman's redemption occurs as Christ calls forth her identity in such a way that she can participate in the mutuality of healthy relationships."<sup>12</sup> It supports the data that realizing the God/Self archetype is linked to increased feelings of self-esteem.

Christian feminism, which maintains a belief in God as both transcendent as well as immanent, should have no problem with Jung's description of the ego as sensing itself as object of the Self, because the Self is the archetype of God.<sup>13</sup> Jung's explanation that the Self had always existed but was simply never recognized by the ego before individuation, corresponds with Christian feminism's emphasis that female God-symbols are linked to experiencing God as immanent. Their symbolism of God as Birth-giver, Water of Life, and nursing Mother, plus their description of feeling more "included" by an "encompassing" God, indicate an agreement with the concept of the Self/God as the always-existent totality of which the ego is only a part. In Mollenkott's autobiography she speaks of "ego reduction as a faith agenda" in the following words:

As I never cease marveling over, it is in the womb of God that all of us live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28), and Christ shared human nature so that we human beings might share the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). When John the Baptist said concerning Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30), he was giving to all of us the

paradigm for the faith journey in our era and every era: that our private ego-gratification must diminish to make room and ever-greater room for Christ's mind, for the viewpoint-of-the-whole, for the divine nature, to live in us. Therefore it seems to me important to think about some of the practical implications of this "dying into life."<sup>14</sup>

An aspect of Jung's theory which has direct bearing on the data of this thesis is Jung's warning against "concretizing" the God/Self archetype into a "Father in Heaven."<sup>15</sup> Since the women of this study place great emphasis on imaging or symbolizing God as physically female, they would appear to have "concretized" the God/Self archetype into a "Mother in Heaven." Jung was concerned that a belief in an all-good God separate from the individual could result in two negative consequences: evil could be projected unto the devil, or the individual could come to view herself as inferior or worthless in comparison to the God in Heaven. For the women of this study the concept of a Father God in Heaven perhaps did carry some of the negative elements Jung warned about, because they do report feelings of alienation connected with symbols of a male God. Here Jung appears at least partially correct in his assessment of the effects of concretizing the Father God archetype. However, it is the idea of being made in the image of God, i.e., female, as symbolized by feminine God-symbols, which gave to the women of this study their increased sense of self-esteem.

"Concretizing" God, therefore, as similar to oneself does not appear here to have the negative possibilities foretold by Jung. It was the concept of God as "absolute," meaning "cut off," or "detached," that concerned Jung in relation to concretizing the God/Self archetype.<sup>16</sup> The women of this study did not report feeling detached from a God symbolized as female, instead a strong sense of the immanency of God symbolized as female can be discerned in the data of the study. Feeling a distance or separation from God is a major theme of Mollenkott's autobiography as she describes her feelings about a God who was always symbolized as "totally other:"

Christ's presence within me had always been described as a take-over by Someone Totally Other, as if a pacemaker had been installed in my chest to control my behaviour. There is an enormous difference between the installation of a foreign object within human nature and the organic identification of human nature with the divine Being. Slowly it dawned upon me that Jesus' own expressions were of organic oneness: the vine and the branches, the internal fountain of living water, interrelating within the Godhead extended to include humankind (John 17), and so forth.<sup>17</sup>

One minor weakness of Jung's theory in regard to its application to the feminist data of this thesis is his lack of any specific reference to the importance that the gender of words may have when words are used as symbols. In connection with archetypes he states that "the name matters little -- everything depends on the connection

between them."<sup>18</sup> For these women the names do matter if they involve gender. As Jung developed his theory before the rise of the modern feminist movement his failure to note that the gender of words could be important is somewhat understandable. Jung does note that "the Hebrew word for spirit -- ruach -- is predominantly feminine," but he none-the-less refers to the Holy Spirit as "He" when writing about the Trinity.<sup>19</sup> His writing indicates that his hierarchical views of the structure of the human family influenced how he interpreted the gender of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Trinity, as he wrote:

These psychological relationships do something to explain why the Holy Ghost was interpreted as the mother, but they add nothing to our understanding of the Holy Ghost as such, because it is impossible to see how the mother could come third when her natural place would be second.<sup>20</sup> (The underlined portion is this writer's emphasis.)

He did, however, clearly recognize that the Great Mother archetype because it was female meant something different for a woman than it did for a man. He never clearly indicated exactly why this should be so. In spite of his concern about the lack of a feminine element in the Trinity, he does not seem to have given consideration to the fact that each member of the Trinity could be comprised of the opposites of female and male. Instead he offers the solution of a Quaternity by considering Mary's assumption into heaven as a provision for both the



feminine and matter into the masculine and spiritual Trinity. As the data of this thesis indicated, Mary does not function as a female God-symbol for the women of this study. Instead they use female symbols in relation to the traditional Christian Trinity. Since Jung's theory allows for the emergence of different symbols in different times and cultures, his lack of consideration of feminine God-symbols for the Trinity does not mean that his theory cannot be applied to explain the function of symbolism regarding the Great Mother per se. In fact, Clift states that Jung would be pleased with the inclusion of the feminine in the God-head as proposed by modern feminists. Clift states that Jung would see the feminist slogan, "Trust in God, She will provide" as

an outer expression of a corrective movement in the collective unconscious heralded symbolically a quarter of a century earlier by the Pope's 1950 proclamation of a bodily assumption of Mary into Heaven.<sup>21</sup>

A much more serious problem emerges with his linkage of Mary, matter, and evil to the Trinity. Basic to Jung's entire theory is his teaching that everything consists of opposites, including God. He clearly states, "To believe that God is the Summum Bonum is impossible for a reflecting consciousness."<sup>22</sup> A negative aspect of God, however, is not referred to by any of the participants of this study. In Chapter Three the writer raised the question of whether one could possibly infer from the

women's reports of alienation experienced when symbolizing God as male that negative attributes were being ascribed to God. It is seriously doubted by the author, however, that these women were projecting evil into God. It is simply too unlikely that they would remain within Christianity if their beliefs differed so radically from the traditional Christian belief in an all-good, loving God. Their inclusion of both male and female symbols for God brings at least the opposites of gender into the Godhead, and so in this respect the data does comply with Jung's theory of the uniting of opposites. A lack of the opposites of good and evil in a female God symbol does not mean that this symbol cannot be a symbol of the Self/God. Jung accepted that Christ was a God-symbol even though Christianity attaches no aspect of evil or sin to Christ. Jung admitted that "the symbol for the Self is not always as total as the definition would require."<sup>23</sup> It is reasonable to assume that Jung would also consider feminine God-symbolism that includes no aspect of evil as also a symbol for the Self. In both cases, he would probably maintain that the lack of opposites detracts from the symbol's ability to express the totality of the psyche in a way comparable to that of a more perfect symbol, such as the mandala.

Although it does not have a direct bearing on how adequately Jung's theory actually explains the data presented by the women of this study, it must be noted

that Christian feminists would not accept Jung's connection of the feminine, matter, and evil. In fact, it is this very association of the feminine with matter and evil and the resultant damage to women's self-esteem that writers such as Mollenkott seek to redress.

Mollenkott points out the important effect symbols can have for minority groups and women:

... both black's and women have been defamed by the traditional symbols of a white racist culture, symbols which elevate day, light, the sun (all traditionally masculine) over night, darkness, and the moon (all traditionally feminine). Dorothee Solle makes the point powerfully: ... "Our culture denies the 'values of the night' and goes to excess in illuminating everything .... But everything that grows and lives also needs darkness. Children look for a cave, a little corner in which to hide; adults build a church that represents darkness and warmth.... The Christian Romantic Poet Clemens Brentano illustrates this need for darkness in the lines

O mother, please keep your  
Little child safe and warm;  
The world's so cold and bright.<sup>24</sup>

Jung's emphasis on the necessity and value of opposites, can be viewed as in agreement with Christian feminism's belief and practice of the use of female symbols for God, in addition to masculine and also genderless symbols. Christian feminists, however, are very wary of devaluing the feminine or imputing evil unto feminine symbolism.

One intriguing question provoked by this study is the question of why some women report a genuinely felt need to symbolize God as female, while the majority of Christian women do not appear to experience this need. The writer can only answer speculatively. One partial answer arose from the study itself. Some women who claim that they are content with solely male symbols for God find to their surprise that female symbols do have a positive emotional effect on them. The general answer to the above question, however, probably lies in giving full consideration to the diverse forces of each individual's entire psyche. The personal consciousness, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious can all contribute to the realization of a God-archetype. Since in many ways "the feminine" has been devalued in North American culture, and has been linked with evil and matter in Christianity, negative culturally-conditioned female imagery in a woman's (or man's) consciousness and personal unconscious may simply prohibit symbolizing the entirely good God of Christianity with female symbols. Also, one may have experienced negative encounters with females. Not all mothers, for example, are good mothers. For some females the Mother as a symbol for God may be totally inappropriate based on their personal experience. Any adequate answer to the question raised above obviously necessitates an extensive and intensive study of both male and female Christians.

In order to use Jung's theory of archetypes and symbols in a way which would be acceptable to the basic tenets of Christian feminism, it is necessary to heed Jung's own words regarding symbols:

Modern man is in fact a curious mixture of characteristics acquired over the long ages of his mental development. This mixed-up being is the man and his symbols that we have to deal with, and we must scrutinize his mental products very carefully indeed. Skepticism and scientific conviction exist in him side by side with old-fashioned prejudices, outdated habits of thought and feeling, obstinate misinterpretations, and blind ignorance.

Such are the contemporary human beings who produce the symbols we psychologists investigate. In order to explain these symbols and their meaning, it is vital to learn whether their representations are related to purely personal experience, or whether they have been chosen by a dream for its particular purpose from a store of general conscious knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

Jung recognizes that "prejudices, outdated habits of thought and feeling, obstinate misinterpretations, and blind ignorance" influence how humanity uses symbols. This recognition and his belief that each individual consciousness gives specific shape and form to the ancient archetype adds greatly to the value of his theory in explaining the function of symbols today. His comments leave one free to question the system of archetypes and symbols commonly used by humanity. Once the effect of culture is included in the discussion, as Jung would agree

is necessary, many of the important questions Christian feminists would address to Jung can be voiced: As women's and men's roles change will symbolism for females and males change: What would be the effects on symbolism if men took over more of the "mothering" tasks traditionally viewed as female? If an increasing number of females choose not to bear children how will this effect both males' and females' use of symbols? Perhaps one of the most important questions a feminist would pose to Jung would be: Did women have an equal input into the myths (extended symbols) of the past, or were these myths devised by males only? Of equal importance is the question of whether a feminist interpretation will bring about a different understanding of symbolism. The author suspects that it will. Mary May Downing, writing about Cretan female God-symbols suggests how radically the understanding and interpretation of symbolism may be affected by a feminist critique:

Our perceptions have long been shaped by the social assumption that maleness is more significant than femaleness. In other words, the change we are invited to make in our thinking by the gynocentric religious imagery from prehistoric Crete is a very radical change. But it is a change that has not yet been fully appreciated. The challenge to think in gynocentric categories has not really been taken up. Few attempts to explain the gynocentric religious imagery, or to reflect on its significance avoid androcentric or other limiting socio-religious assumptions.<sup>26</sup>

She also presents a good example of how a feminist interpretation of the opposites of good and evil found in Great Mother symbolism can present a different perspective than has often been the case in the past. In commenting on Cretan symbols of the Great Mother represented as the breast concealing a vulture's beak or fox's jaw, she emphasizes that "The breast contains the vulture, not the vulture the breast. Life encloses death. Life comes after death."<sup>27</sup> Downing, therefore gives to this symbolism highly positive attributes which she infers may not have been emphasized by non-feminist archeologists or anthropologists. She also indicates that the nature/fertility motif is not the sole emphasis of Cretan Goddess imagery, suggesting that one needs to examine critically a sometimes too narrow interpretation of female God-symbols.<sup>28</sup>

A strength of Jung's theory is that change can be accommodated as culture changes. Of course one cannot predict what changes in symbolism will take place in the future as women's and men's experience of each other and of themselves changes. The similarities of God-symbolism used by the women of this study with some of the symbolism used in connection with the Great Mother God of the past, however, indicates that a link with human history will always be maintained. The archetype lives on. Since women are the birth-givers of humanity the symbols of nurturing and birth connected with the Great Mother are

not likely to disappear. Similarly, since women are flesh and blood creatures who act in both negative and positive ways in association with other human beings, it is to be expected that both negative and positive aspects of female symbolism will continue to exist because of this influence.

This thesis has demonstrated that female symbols for God are in use by Christian feminists of today, and that these symbols correspond to some of the symbols surrounding the concept of a female God throughout history. It has also been shown that according to Jung's theory symbols for the Great Mother can have the power to cause increased self-esteem in the women of this study. The author has established that Jung's theory can legitimately be used to explain the data. Transposing Jung's theory into Christian terms, it can be said that symbols have the power to influence human personality because "they function as psychological channels for God's grace."<sup>29</sup> Since they are such powerful carriers and expressers of human emotion, an ever-expanding understanding of symbols must continually be sought for humanity in our own time. This thesis has sought, and found, one possible explanation of why symbols are powerful. However, the search must continue.



Footnotes for Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup>David W. Aycock and Susan Noaker, "A Comparison in the Self-Esteem Levels in Evangelical Christian and General Populations," Journal of Psychology & Theology, 13, No. 3 (1985), p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>Joland Jacobi, The Psychology of C. G. Jung, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup>The King James Version of the Bible uses female pronouns for the Eagle in Deut. 32:11,12. The Jerusalem Bible, The New England Bible, and the Revised Standard Bible do not. For a discussion of the image of God as Mother Eagle see Peter Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), p. 381; and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, The Divine Feminine, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 83-91.

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of the feminist definition of "sin" see: Nancy Wiles Holsey, "The Elder Sister, The Struggle for a Personal History of Redemption," Daughters of Sarah, 12, No.2, (March/April, 1986), p. 20-24.

Madonna Kolbenshlag, Kiss Sleeping Beauty Goodbye, (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1981), pp. 180-181.

Diane Marshall, "Current Issues of Women and Therapy," Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 4, No. 1, (Spring, 1985), pp. 62-72.

<sup>5</sup>Holsey, "The Elder Sister," p. 22-23.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Marshall, "Current Issues of Women ..." p. 62-72.

<sup>8</sup>C. G. Jung, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, trans., R.F.C. Hull, (New York: Crossroads, 1966) 6, p. 425.

<sup>9</sup>Jacobi, The Psychology of C. G. Jung, p. 129.

<sup>10</sup>Jung, 6, p. 448.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 6, p. 448.

<sup>12</sup>Holsey, "The Elder Sister," p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> Many feminists who do not adhere to the Christian faith emphasize only God's immanence, and deny the existence of a transcendent God. See: Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism, (Beacon Press, 1978); Carol Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," Religious Studies Review, 3, No. 4 (October 1977), 273-286; Starhawk, The Spiral Dance: Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess, (Harper and Row, 1979); and Naomi Goldenberg, "Archetypal Theory and the Separation of Mind and Body: Reason Enough to Turn to Freud?" Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 1, No. 1 (Spring 1985), pp. 55-72.

<sup>14</sup> Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Speech, Silence, Action! (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), pp. 124-125.

<sup>15</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 7, p. 236.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 7, p. 235.

<sup>17</sup> Mollenkott, Speech, Silence, Action!, p. 99.

<sup>18</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 8, p. 112.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 11, p. 101, 162.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 11, p. 162.

<sup>21</sup> Wallace B. Clift, Jung & Christianity, (New York: Crossroad, 1983), p. xiii.

<sup>22</sup> Jung, Collected Works, 11, p. 419.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>24</sup> Mollenkott, Speech, Silence, Action! pp. 143-144.

<sup>25</sup> Jung, Man & His Symbols, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1984), pp. 86-87.

<sup>26</sup> Mary May Downing, "Prehistoric Goddesses: The Cretan Challenge," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 1, No. 1, (Spring, 1985), p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-15.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-18.

<sup>29</sup> Dr. H. Coward aptly described the individuation process using those words in a personal conversation.

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APPENDIX A

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Marital Status: Single \_\_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_  
Widowed \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you a mother? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
4. If the answer to the above is "yes", how many  
children have you given birth to? \_\_\_\_\_ How many  
children have you adopted? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many brothers and sisters were there in your  
family when you were growing up in your family home?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Brothers \_\_\_\_\_ Sisters  
(Please include deceased members of your family.)  
My brothers' ages are: \_\_\_\_\_  
My sisters' ages are: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Were both of your parents present during the years  
you spent in the family home?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Both mother and father were present  
\_\_\_\_\_ Mother was absent  
\_\_\_\_\_ Father was absent
7. If either of your parents was absent, was this due  
to: \_\_\_\_\_ death, \_\_\_\_\_ marriage separation, or \_\_\_\_\_ other.  
(Please explain if the answer is "other".)
8. How old were you when the event referred to in  
Question 7 occurred? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Check as many blanks in this question as you feel relate to yourself: I have enjoyed a warm loving relationship with: a mother \_\_\_\_, a father \_\_\_\_, a brother \_\_\_\_, a sister \_\_\_\_, a male friend \_\_\_\_, a female friend \_\_\_\_.
10. Check the highest level of education you have achieved: Grade School \_\_\_\_ High School \_\_\_\_ Technical School \_\_\_\_ Some university \_\_\_\_ University degree \_\_\_\_ Some graduate study \_\_\_\_ Graduate degree \_\_\_\_
11. What is your present occupation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. If you are employed outside the home, is this full time \_\_\_\_ or part time? \_\_\_\_
13. How many years have you been employed outside of the home? \_\_\_\_
14. Are you involved in volunteer work? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_  
List the agencies you are involved with, indicate your job there, and list the number of hours per week spent on that job.
15. What is your religious denomination or affiliation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Using Webster's dictionary definition of feminism: "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes," would you call yourself a feminist? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

17. Have you changed your religious denomination since becoming a feminist? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
18. Approximately how many years have you been a feminist? \_\_\_\_ years.
19. Would you call yourself a "Christian feminist"?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
20. In general, how happy would you say you are? Are you: Very happy \_\_\_\_, Happy \_\_\_\_, Not very happy \_\_\_\_, Unhappy \_\_\_\_, or Very unhappy \_\_\_\_.
21. Which of the following books have you read, or are you aware of. (This question is adapted from Reader Survey Founding Daughters of Sarah May/June 1984, 10, no. 3.)

Have <u>Read</u>	I am <u>Aware of</u>
---------------------	-------------------------

_____	_____	Women, Men & the Bible (Mollenkott)
_____	_____	Speech, Silence, Action! (Mollenkott)
_____	_____	The Divine Feminine (Mollenkott)
_____	_____	Beyond God The Father (Daly)
_____	_____	Religion & Sexism (Ruether)
_____	_____	All We're Meant to Be (Hardesty & Scanzoni)
_____	_____	Womanspirit Rising (Christ & Plaskow)
_____	_____	Our Struggle to Serve (Hearne)
_____	_____	Woman Be Free! (Gundry)
_____	_____	Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective (Russell)

\_\_\_\_\_ MAN as Male and Female (Jewett)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Kolbensschlag)  
\_\_\_\_\_ God & the Rhetoric of Sexuality  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Trible)  
\_\_\_\_\_ The Strength of the Weak (Soelle)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Seizing the Apple (Carmody)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

22. Please circle up to 3 of the above books which you feel have been most important to you.
23. List the Christian feminist magazines or newsletters you read regularly:
24. Please circle on the statements below whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), are undecided (UN), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD). (This question is adapted from Reader Survey Founding Daughters of Sarah May/June 1984, 10, no. 3.)
- |    |   |    |   |    |   |
|----|---|----|---|----|---|
| SA | A | UN | D | SD | My closest friends are women  |
| SA | A | UN | D | SD | (if married) My spouse and I have an egalitarian marriage.          |
| SA | A | UN | D | SD | I feel comfortable with my local church's stance on women's issues. |
| SA | A | UN | D | SD | My church is more conservative on women's issues than I am.         |

SA A UN D SD I feel comfortable with my denomination's stance on women's issues.

SA A UN D SD My denomination is more conservative on women's issues than I am.

SA A UN D SD I believe that the Bible teaches the equality of male and female.

SA A UN D SD Where they seem to contradict, I would rank women's experience above biblical authority.

25. Please answer the following questions by checking the appropriate space.

Always    Often    Sometimes    Never

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ I use inclusive language when talking to other people.

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ I use inclusive language when talking to others and referring to God.

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ I use female words for God (i.e., Mother, She, etc.) when speaking to other people about God.

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ I think of God as female.

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ I think of God as male.

\_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_ I think of God as both female and male.

_____	_____	_____	_____	I think of God as neither female nor male.
_____	_____	_____	_____	When I am in a worship service which uses only male words and images for God I feel uncomfortable.
_____	_____	_____	_____	I attend worship services which include the partici- pation of female clergy.
_____	_____	_____	_____	God is present within me.

26. List all of the words or images you use to speak of  
or think about God. (These may be from the Bible or  
from any other source.) Underline your favourites.  
(If this space is insufficient, use the back of this  
page.

27. If you have included female words or images above,  
how long have you been using these words or images?  
\_\_\_\_\_ years.

28. If you use simply the word "God" or "You" or "Thou",  
etc. do you intend that word to be: masculine \_\_\_\_,  
feminine \_\_\_\_, both \_\_\_\_, neither masculine nor  
feminine \_\_\_\_.

29. Do you ever address the Deity as "Goddess"?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

30. Using the space below and on the reverse side of this page, tell me how you came to use female words for God. Include conferences, writings, friends, or educational influences which you feel influenced you to use female words for God. Include any spiritual experiences which led you to initially use female words or imagery for God, or any spiritual experiences which you believe encouraged you to use female words or imagery more than you had been using them. Use extra pages if necessary.







35. Describe how you feel in a worship service conducted solely with masculine words and imagery for God.

(You may want to attend such a worship service before answering this question, in order to accurately assess your emotions.)

36. When you are attending a worship service which uses masculine symbols or words solely, do you ever change the words of the hymns or the liturgy to feminine words, or inclusive language? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Do you do this silently to yourself, or out loud? \_\_\_\_

Do you ever refuse to sing or participate in a service because of the language of the hymn or liturgy? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If the answer to either of the above is "yes", could you tell me why you do this?