THE IMPACT OF CREATION MYTHS IN
FORGING NEW FRONTIERS OF
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Lynda Shirley Weatherstone

BHumanities & Education BA

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
School of Education
Faculty of Education and Arts
The University of Newcastle
May 2020
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or any other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library**, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the Copyright Act 1968.

**Unless an embargo has been approved for a determined period.

Signed: [Signature] Date: 23rd May 2020

i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Rachel Buchanan and Prof Terry Lovat for stepping in when my previous supervisor could not continue in a supervisory position. I would like to thank both Rachel and Terry who have provided their support and encouragement by allowing me to continue the research topic about which I am so passionate.

I would like to thank and acknowledge Prof Ron Laura, who gave me the initial support and encouragement to pursue my research topic. Thank you for being more than a supervisor. Throughout this philosophical adventure, you have been a teacher, a mentor and a friend. Thank you for establishing the creative space and for the academically nurturing environment you provided for us with in your Thursday afternoon group.

Thank you to my friends who have given me their support throughout this academic journey. Thank you to each one of you for keeping me sane; thank you all for your input, understanding and emotional support when I needed it.

I would like to acknowledge the support I received from Prof Laura’s Thursday afternoon study group. This was truly a community of inquiry; a place where I could develop my scholarly proclivities with a nurturing, caring yet stimulating and challenging group of fellow scholars. Thank you all for your robust intellectual arguments.

I would also like to thank The University of Newcastle for allowing me to continue my research by providing me with the many extensions when I needed it due to ill health.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family. To my daughter Brooke, thank you for understanding the blank looks, lack of memory, and tunnel vision during my academic journey. You were always there when I needed help filling in online forms, or being able to help when my computer crashed with the belief that I had lost everything. Thank you for your patience, love and support throughout this incredible journey.
DEDICATION

In loving memory of my mother, aunt, nana, grandmother and great grandmother

Each one of you has left an indelible imprint upon my soul
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.................................................................i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS....................................................ii
DEDICATION..................................................................iii
ABSTRACT.........................................................................vii

**Introduction**..................................................................1

- Definition of Key Terms ..................................................10
- Research Theory ............................................................12
- Outline of Chapters ........................................................15
  - Chapter 1: When God Was a Woman ................................15
  - Chapter 2: In the Beginning ............................................16
  - Chapter 3: The Power of the ‘Word’ - Metamorphoses of a Myth .......17
  - Chapter 4: Genesis - Eve: the Metamorphoses of a Myth ..............18
  - Chapter 5: And Her Name is Wisdom ..................................18
  - Chapter 6: The Ordination of Women as Equals .......................19

**Chapter 1: When God Was a Woman** ........................................21

- Introduction ....................................................................21
- What Became of God the Mother? ....................................21
- God the Mother .............................................................26
- Historical and Archaeological Evidence ............................28
- Background to the Veneration of the Great Goddess .............33
- Defining the ‘Feminine Principle’ ......................................36
- Woman as Mana Figure ..................................................39
- Matriarchal Theory as a Corpus for Forgotten History ...........41
- The Dominant Legacy – War as an Ethos ............................45
- A World Under Pressure ..................................................51
- Cultural Changes ............................................................53
- The Rupture Between Man and Nature ..............................55
- Feminist Theological Epistemology ...................................58
- Creation Mythology and the Erosion of the Feminine Principle ..64
- Conclusion ......................................................................66

**Chapter 2: In the Beginning**..................................................67
Rape as a Technology of Violence ................................................................. 144
Pornography and the Technology of Violence ............................................. 150
Christianity and the Technology of Violence .............................................. 155
Conclusion .................................................................................................. 157

Chapter 5: And Her Name is Wisdom ............................................................ 159
Introduction .................................................................................................. 159
The Deformation of Sexuality and of Women ............................................... 160
The Sacred Harlot - Sacred Sexuality .......................................................... 163
From Seer to Witch and the Wise-Women in Between ................................. 168
The Wisdom of the Serpent ........................................................................ 179
Wisdom is Her Name: .................................................................................. 182
The Feminine Motifs in Nag Hammadi Documents ...................................... 184
The Virgin and the Whore .......................................................................... 187
Sin and Sexuality as a Communicable Disease ............................................ 193
Pagan Myth Becomes Christian Symbolism ............................................... 197
Conclusion .................................................................................................. 200

Chapter 6: The Ordination of Women as Equals .......................................... 202
Introduction .................................................................................................. 202
Institutional Hubris ...................................................................................... 203
The Untold Story .......................................................................................... 209
The Role of Women in Early Christian Beginnings ..................................... 213
Women in Early Celtic Christianity .............................................................. 214
Female Ascetics/Becoming Male ................................................................. 218
The Discrepancy Surrounding Sexual Difference ........................................ 221
The Ordination of Women .......................................................................... 223
Sacred Clothing and the Complication of Women’s Bodies ......................... 226
The Historical Right for Ordination .............................................................. 227
The Relevance of Goddess Religion ............................................................ 230
Shifting the Mythic Narrative ................................................................... 235
Conclusion .................................................................................................. 238

Conclusion .................................................................................................. 241
References ................................................................................................... 257
ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis has been to develop and track both the evolution and the loss of the Feminine Principle. I intend to provide a coherent account of the social ramifications that have been applied to both women (and men) that have underpinned this loss. I argue that the Feminine Principle is a philosophy based on wholeness, non-dualism, and personhood, rather than the rational metaphysics that permeates Western culture today. I endeavour to track the journey of the Feminine Principle starting with the myth of the Great Goddess of Beginnings, or Great Mother, who gives birth to her son-lover-consort: both bring forth life and the world (Baring & Cashford, 1991). Hereafter, the relationship changes from one of partnership to the overthrow of the Great Goddess by her son who becomes the all powerful, patriarchal warrior Sky God who now creates alone without any reference to the fecund womb of the archetypal Mother Goddess. I indicate how this Bronze Age myth travels through to the Iron Age myth of Genesis whereby the Father God creates life by word alone, giving rise to reason replacing all mythical thought. Within the framework of these structural impediments, I demonstrate how the theology of Genesis is a palimpsest of myths that have been misappropriated by patriarchy setting women apart by men because of their “creational difference” (Fiorenza, 1985, p.4). It could be argued that this form of religiously orientated sexism and bigotry is being perpetuated and retold as the dominate focus within Religious Education. A way of addressing this form of discrimination is by exploring the relationship between Public Theology and public education. Although Public Theology has been extensively overlooked (Perner, 2019), as a topic, Public Theology offers a vehicle for reconceptualising the status of women by making theology and religion relevant to the social order (Ali, 1995).
Introduction

The aim of the thesis is to present an alternative interpretation of religious/spiritual ideology and to demonstrate how this alternative vision reorganises true relationships between the genders. To advance this critical exploration, I have for some years now, explored mythology from a number of diverse religions, and it is my intention to establish that they, in turn, contain a deep philosophical commitment to what I shall call the ‘Feminine Principle’. The Feminine Principle is a philosophy that argues for wholeness and personhood rather than a philosophy of moral and ethical inequality. In theory, the Feminine Principle is the untapped subtle potential that lies at the very core of our being, and it must be realised to restore the balance and harmony between intuition and intellect, feelings and facts, alongside of reason and realism (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Mills, 1987). I shall show how the rich insights contained in these principles can be utilised to supply a powerful heuristic for reconceptualising the patriarchal epistemology enshrined in the Genesis Creation story. The long-established epistemology that underpins the paradigm for female inequality has been grounded in the foundational mythology of Western Judeo-Christian thought, starting with the Genesis interpretation of the Traditional readings.

Women represent one half of humanity. But historically women have been forced to live in the shadows of men, being deprived of opportunities to fully realise themselves as individuals. Through gender-bias, a social construct that discriminates women from men on the basis of their sex difference – reinforced by institutionalised patriarchy, women have been enslaved and have even internalised all forms of oppression and suppression against them. It is interesting to note, if we turn our focus to mythology, myths reveal the beliefs as well as the sufferings of those who have handed down sacred stories - myths are also an exemplum of what not to do.

A prime example is the creation mythology found in Genesis 2:21-24. The story of Eve is the concept of women in Western civilisation: she is the prototype for every woman to come. Eve’s history is foundational to the Western ideology of all women. Her story has been reworked, in literature, law, social customs, which have shaped the nature and destiny of Western women (Baring, 2015; Laura, &, Buchanan, 2012; Antonelli, 2004).
The overthrow of the Feminine Principal, as Eve, has been stamped on all women by way of the collective unconscious (Noddings, 1993; Baring, 2015). In *The Will to Choose or Reject: Continuing Our Critical Work* Fiorenza contends, women are set apart by men because of their “creational difference” (Fiorenza, 1985, p.4). It could be argued that this form of religiously orientated sexism and bigotry is being perpetuated and retold as the dominant theme within contemporary Religious Education. Students need to be made aware of the discrimination females have suffered as a consequence of the Biblical Creation Myth. A new foundational curriculum is required within Religious Education as the subject matter as currently studied leads to religiously orientated sexism and discrimination. The notion of Religious enquiry is diverse: for this reason Public Theology acts as a means to address these forms of exploitation as it explores the relationship between Public Theology and public education (Pirner, 2019; Lovat, 1989, 2019, Kim, 2019). As a topic, notes Perner, Public Theology has been widely neglected (Pirner, 2019). Re-engaging with Public theology offers a means for reconceptualising the status of women.

Public Theology is a medium for addressing religious educational forms of religiously orientated sexism by “making theology and religion relevant to the social order to help spiritualise or re-spiritualise it; in addition to, or in conjunction with, the resources of history and sociology, political theory psychology, economic analysis, etc” (Ali, 1995, p.67). Lovat (1989) argues that RE programs should address specific theological controversies as well as the more general features of religion, its strengths as well as weaknesses, positive/negative attributes while elaborating on its theological complexities: what is healthy and unhealthy (Lovat, 1989, pp.60-61). Students should have foundational knowledge of the religions that make up his/her society. Public Theology offers a vehicle for the provision of an alternative religious education, one that includes feminist hermeneutics alongside of traditional theology. The female voice has long been excluded from the scriptures: with the emphasis on the male dominated imagery, nouns, pronouns and symbols (Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Baring, 2015; Pagels, 2006; Ruether, 1983, 2005; Fiorenza, 1985). Christ & Plaskow (2016), note the male voice has dominated Biblical text, men have written about women since the male voice is considered normative (Christ & Plaskow, 2016, pp.131-146). Even though the Bible was written at different times within different cultures, its influence has generated longstanding gender-politics of religiously endorsed sexism.
Leader (2018) notes there are two opposing Christian views on masculinity: love and compassion, or domination, subordination and exclusion of women (Leader, 2018, p.5). We, as women, need to avoid generalizations about, and essentialising men, to distinguish between the men who love, empower and support us and the male systems of power that have to be resisted, we do not have to hate men to fight against sexism, misogyny and pornography. Similarly we have to acknowledge that women also have a dark side, that retaliation, sexism and cruelty are part of a woman’s makeup as well.

As such, ‘White male’ authors occur throughout my thesis because it has been the male voice who has had the major voice in critiquing Western perspectives on women – Markale, Spong, O’Murchu and other relevant scholarly voices are not fixed by gender or social discrimination: they empower the female voice. Spong and Markale are both controversial figures: Spong is a contentious figure towards Biblical scholarship, agitating for a ‘woman’s voice’ to be heard within academia. Markale’s views are discredited by some academics noting that he is an armchair academic, while in many instances his research is backed up by feminist scholarship (Christ, 2018; Scarre, 2017; Voth, 2010; Hale, 2009, Ruether, 2005; Elster, 2007, 2015). There are many voices within my research, crossing over many disciplines, acting as my voice, within the thesis. This interdisciplinary approach is used to argue for an alternative religious understanding of the feminine principle.

Another objective within the thesis is to explore how Religious Education is one of the primary vehicles by way of which patriarchal theism is covertly promulgated, and the Creation Story found in Genesis has long served pedagogically to foster an epistemology which is patriarchal in disposition (Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Laura & Chalender, 2012; Ruether, 1981, 2005; Lerner, 1986a; Daly, 1973). The thesis will also explore the long history of female suppression to determine the extent to which the ideology of ‘patriarchal theism’ has adversely affected the role of women. Laura and Buchanan define patriarchal theism as the “conceptualisation of a God who reflects a patriarchal understanding and ordering of the world” (Laura & Buchanan, 2012, p.170). It is my wish in this thesis, to explore the possibility that Christian thought, rather than establishing the beginning of female subordination, continued the existing chain of thought already in practice.
Within my thesis, there are critical questions that I put forward to advance a hypothesis in support of the difficult questions: were the text written out of men’s fear and fantasy? Does the text reflect women’s roles or behaviour or does Biblical text serve and protect patriarchal behaviour? Since ancient times men have been the gatekeepers of Biblical text. Forasmuch as women’s stories are told through the eyes of men, what have been the moral short falls of these accounts?

As researchers Bird and Schole argue, we gather, organise, evaluate, translate, interpret, re-represent and communicate information about religion (Bird &, Scholes, 2013, p.1). We have a moral obligation to ensure ethical integrity in our efforts to produce and disseminate knowledge about religion and religious life (p.1) however painful this might be to the reader. Bearing this in mind, my thesis crosses many boundaries examining the gap within the existing knowledge, which drives this proposal.

The Genesis stories need, in an educational sense, to be read and interpreted in the context of other mythologies which have informed and shaped the story on the one hand, where appropriate, while on the other, the Genesis account has itself contributed towards its own portrayal. These alternative mythologies provide evidence that honours women empathetically by emphasising their personhood as it finds its expression in the potential role of women as ‘Goddess’, ‘Mother’, ‘Oracle’, ‘Healer’, ‘Crone’, ‘Wise-Woman’,… etc (Neumann, 1955; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Long, 1992; Young, 1994; Markale, 1999).

As I am of Irish heritage, I am deeply connected to the Irish landscape, mythology, and to all things Celtic. Within my thesis I will explore the important contribution made to the socio-cultural development of the Feminine Principle by way of Celtic Mythology (Lysaght, 1986; C. Matthews, 1992, 2002a; Markale, 1999; O’Murchu, 2013). Within this context of philosophical reflection I shall explore the concepts and symbolism that consolidate the nuances of relationship between woman and nature, thus providing a more balanced perspective on the complementary rather than competing value discourse of patriarchal theism. Celtic mythology is dominated by the archetypal feminine, she is both creator of the land and the land itself. It is the primordial Feminine which shapes the gods and heroes of the stories manifesting out of a sense of connected and interconnectedness (Rees &, Rees, 1989; Beresford-Ellis, 1995; Markale, 1999; Matthews, 1999. 2002; ÓhÓgáin, 2006).
Beresford-Ellis notes Celtic historiography demonstrated the high status of women within cult and literature. Within the early historical period women lived in relative harmony with men, an entirely different concept to the repressive Classical male dominated society of the Mediterranean, and Europe (Beresford-Ellis, 1995, p.19, p.137). Women in Celtic myth are a reflection of the historical women in early Celtic society (p.75), honoured for both their minds and their bodies (p.40). Evidence gathered from the corpus of Celtic mythology, and law, demonstrates how Celtic sexual ethic was different from their fellow Europeans, sexual guilt was unheard of, however everything would change with the introduction of Christianity and Cannon law (Devlin-Glass, 2001; Beresford-Ellis, 1995; Matthews, C. & Matthews, J. 1999; Anwyl, 1906).

Some feminist assert the basis of religious symbolism was founded on the Great Mother, and that now there is a pressing need to restore the Feminine face of the Divine to the Godhead. Christ (2018a) writes the symbol of the Goddess is as old as human history. Feminist scholars and other academics have advanced theories that the initial creatrix and source of all life was the Great Goddess as Mother (Christ, 2018a; Baring, 2015; Hale, 2009; Holland, 2005; Markale, 1999). Fontaine (1990), states in the absence of text from the Neolithic era, we are forced to rely on iconographic representations, also recovery of material culture through archaeological excavation (Fontaine, 1990, p.1). Archaeological reconstructions of culture are neither free from biases and preconceptions of their excavators than literary readings of ancient texts are free from values imposed on them by their modern critics. Hence we may see widely different interpretations of a single artefact: the ‘Venus figurines’ (Fontaine, 1990; Von Petzinger, 2016). In her article Great Goddess, Mother Goddess, Creatrix, Source of life, Christ notes, the most ancient images are from the Palaeolithic era, it is from the Neolithic Old Europe (Christ, 2018a; Von Petzinger, 2016; Elster, 2015), archaeologists freely made comparisons between figurines found in disparate cultures, drawing on essentialising notions of femaleness or a universal psychology (Leasure, 2011). Marija Gimbutas (1989, 1991), was an important and controversial figure in the study of gender and women within archaeology, Elster notes, Gimbutas “is a foremost example of this approach” (Elster, 2007, 2015; Leasure, 2011; Christ, 2017a). In Marija Gimbutas: Setting the Agenda, Elster states that Gimbutas’ research has played a key role in women’s studies and in feminist thought generally, and her ideas have had an impact well beyond the borders of the academic world (Elster, 2007, p.83; Elster, 2015;
Christ 2017a). She is recognised as a pioneering researcher in Old Europe, her critics had difficulty in accepting her ideas of Old Europe’s matrifocal organisation and the “longue durée” that she postulated for the pantheon (Elster, 2017, p.101; Christ, 2017a; De Meeo, 2006, 2013; Campbell, 2013). Her critics regarded her work as being unscholarly, however as Christ (2017), argues in *Marija Gimbutas Triumphant: Colin Renfrew Concedes*, Lord Renfrew, who had been one of her most vociferous antagonists and a powerful gatekeeper, concluded the with these words: “Marija [Gimbutas’] Kurgan hypothesis has been magnificently vindicated” (Christ, 2017a, p.2). Basing his argument on new scientific evidence gathered from DNA samples of ancient bones and language of the ‘Yamnaya people’, Renfrew upheld her hypothesis that a new population element, most likely speaking an Indo-European language, entered Europe at the time she postulated. Renfrew further stated that little research had been done on DNA of ancient bones (p.3).

Although sacred text of Judaism, Christianity and Islam contain statements that urge respect and fairness for women, heterodox and mythical literature emphasise the inferiority of women (Noddings, 1993; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Frankenberry, 2018). Christian misogyny is its own phenomenon (Antonelli, 2001) many feminists argue that there is a need for a broader conversation (Fiorenza, 1985; Ruether, 1983, 2005; Johnson, 1994; Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Frankenberry, 2018). The work of Christ and Plaskow (2016), has proven to be a “critical text for all of those who wish to understand patriarchal religions...Its chapters posit truths that traditional theologies are reticent to acknowledge, most loomingly that theologies cannot be devoiced from concrete human experiences, particularly if they are positive ones” (Schingler, 2016, p.3). Judith Plaskow, Jewish feminist, and theologian is firmly rooted in the Jewish tradition. Like fellow theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, Plaskow recognises that the Bible, as well as the Jewish and Christian traditions have good and bad in them. (Christ, 2018a, Christ & Plaskow, 2016). While her contemporary Carol Christ proposes the Goddess is the intelligent embodied love that is in all being (Christ & Plaskow, pp.258-263; Christ, 2018a). Christ comments it is necessary to dispel a common assumption that there can be no ethics in Goddess religion because ethics stem from a transcendent principle of justice that stands outside the world (Christ, 2018b, p.4). Christ (2018a) contends Goddess feminism was born of an explicit critique of societies organised around male domination, violence, war, and of
the male God or Gods of patriarchal religions as justifying domination, violence, and war. In this context, the ‘sacred masculine’ was not understood to be a neutral or positive concept. To the contrary, the male Gods of patriarchy were understood to be at the centre of symbol systems that justify domination (Christ, 2018a, p.2). Christ contends “one reason the creative re-imaging of God as female has not taken hold in the churches and synagogues is fear of paganism and the Goddess” (Christ, 2018c, p.2)

The Mother Goddess is to be found at the foundation of most civilizations as the oldest myths match the observations of the ethnologists. In the beginning, humanity was convinced that women were mainly responsible for procreation (Markale, 1997; Eisler, 1998; Hale, 2009; Voth, 2010; Baring, 2015). Feminist religious studies has seen in recent years a revived interest in the mythology of the ancient world (Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Christ, 2018a; Elster, 2017; Eisler, 1993, 2000; Mathews, 1992, 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Long, 1992; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Gimbutas, 1989). This being so, Devlin-Glass and McCreddon (2001), argue for a re-reading and reconstructing of women’s history, and literary epistemologies (Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001, pp.7-9). While Fiorenza advocates for feminist exegesis to treat Biblical studies with a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Fiorenza, 1985, p.7). Women have long suffered discrimination under theological and philosophical theories that claimed the ‘natural’ superiority of male over female because the female is different to creation (Fiorenza, 1985).

Claims for natural male superiority are found in Aristotelian philosophy describing women as ‘misbegotten males’ (Fiorenza, 1985; Noddings, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Christ & Plaskow, 2016) and Christian theologians such as Thomas Aquinas who queried why women should have been created at all, reasoning, it was only their participation in the act of reproduction that necitated their existence. Theologians used the story of the Fall to add moral superiority to the merely ‘natural’ male (Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Massam, 2012; Wijngaards, 2015; Noddings, 1993; Fiorenza, 1985). Augustine of Hippo’s view was particularly damaging, inasmuch as his interpretation of gender has shaped Western thinking for the last sixteen hundred years, seeing that Catholicism has difficulty in affirming the full dignity of women (Brakke, 2015; Armstrong, 2005; Wijngaards, 1997, 2001; Power, 1995; Long, 1988; Ruether, 1983). Rakoczy (2005)
contends Augustine argued that women by themselves are not the full image of God, but only through their husbands:

_The women with her husband is the image of God in such a way that the whole of that substance is one image, but when she is assigned her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she is not the image of God: whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole_ (Regius, 354 -430, as cited in Rakoczy, 2005, pp.31-32).

Fiddes (1990) demonstrates Barth’s theology is based on a covenant of relationship, contending that it is a matter of headship, drawing his arguments on gender equality from the voice of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:3; “I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ; the head of every woman is her husband; and the head of Christ is the Father”, and the story of creation in Genesis 2:21-24, in which woman is taken out of man, portrays the truth of divine order. Men and women are not equal because of the order in which God had allotted them (Fiddes, 1990, p.3).

While reading a paper written by her co-author Carol Christ, Plaskow did not at first grasp the full implications of Christ’s argument regarding a statement made by Karl Barth that “women are ontologically subordinate to men”. Over time, she came to realise the importance of such misogynistic comments were not just to be brushed aside and forgotten. Her insistence that such comments “are thoroughly intertwined with theological understandings of God and humanity led me to a far-reaching theological critique of Judaism” (Christ & Plaskow, 2016, p.53).

Feminists have become skilled at reading for ‘traces’ of older mythologies and at rereading text as palimpsests, (aforementioned palimpsest is when something is reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form) this epistemological purpose has inevitably skewed how they have been read. Deconstructing the overt sexism found in orthodox traditions is crucial to women’s liberation (Fiorenza, 1985; Devlin-Glass & McCredden, 2001; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). This would involve a reconceptualisation of the old mythology regarding relations between the Mother Goddess and the Father God – a new image of the godhead. Women look for a new form of spirituality that acknowledges the Feminine Principle, a unification of image and reason. While goddess
feminists argue for Goddess to replace God, Goddess worship can be misconstrued as the same form of dualism. Christianity has been very thorough in its exclusion of the Feminine; however, feminine motifs are found in the Bible in the ‘wisdom traditions’. Christ (2018), *Sophia, Goddess, & Feminist Spirituality* notes, Sophia is the Greek word for wisdom, translating into Hebrew ‘hokmah’ (Christ, 2018d, p.5). A personification called *hokmah* is mentioned in Proverbs, and Sophia, is pictured as the female face of God in the Wisdom of Solomon, written in Greek by Jews in the Roman Empire (p.5). Pagels (2006a) notes, certain Biblical passages within Proverbs state “God made the world in ‘Wisdom’ – could ‘Wisdom’ be the feminine power in which God’s creation was conceived” (Pagels, 2006a, p.76). *The Lord by Wisdom founded the earth, established the heavens by understanding* (Proverbs.19).

Here is the Biblical precedence for a gender symbolism that is very different in the portrait of Sophia/Wisdom who develops beyond the early images of personification into a cognate female symbol of the divine, influenced undoubtedly by the figure of Isis (Lee, 2001, p.211; Richter, 2001; Reuther, 2005; Johnson, 1994). The figure of Sophia herself has been quite forgotten, but remains in Biblical text as a startling, female, personification of the mystery of God in powerful and close engagement with the world (Pagels, 2006a; Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001; Johnson, 1994, p.100). She bridges the gulf between Creator and creation and joins together spirit and matter. Her sovereignty pervades the world, both in nature and humanity, interacting with them all along the right path to life (Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001; Johnson, 1994, p.87). Matthews (1992) “The loss of the Divine Feminine from Consciousness is a wound which we all carry, without her dimension of love and justice we exile ourselves from the earth, from physicality and from each other” (Matthews, 1992, p.54). Johnson (1994) writes the female imagery of Sophia as Wisdom was once was God’s wife (Johnson, p.57). Sophia, or Wisdom, has been forgotten amongst the palimpsest of layered patriarchal exegesis, overt sexism and misogyny, however, the figure of Wisdom can be used in the public sphere as Public theology (Kim, 2019), shared by people of belief, or unbelief in a communal vision for humanity. When the Church forgets that women, too, were created in God’s image, it limits not only women but also God (Hollyday, 1994, p.4).
Definition of Key Terms

1. **Feminine Principle** is the foundation upon which all of life is based. The Feminine refers to neither gender nor woman inasmuch as the Feminine refers to the complimentary face of God - a reality that still remains missing in the religious traditions of today. Conceptually the ‘Feminine Principle’ is held to be the antithesis, “the definite negation, of the surplus aggressive and repressive needs and values of capitalism as a form of male-dominated culture” (Mills, 1987, p.xviii). In mythology, it is only through marriage to the goddess-queen that the hero learns the ultimate knowledge of life, for the woman is life (de Motte, 2003, p.125). The affect of the Feminine Principle is responsible for our growing concern for the integrity of the life systems of the planet and the attraction to the mythic and the spiritual.

2. **Divine Feminine**: The divine feminine is unified multiplicity: representative of wholeness, born out of the visible and the transcendent, “she is the voice of the feminine body and of the earth itself, born of endless creation and destruction and recreation” (Dunn-Mascetti, 1994, p.6; Ruether, 2005; O’Murchu, 2013).

3. **Creation Mythology** rises from the depths of the human psyche. Emanating from a ‘beginning-less’ entity, the origin of all life both cosmic and earthly out of which it began. Conceptually, creation myths are usually linked to a deity, a goddess or a god. The structure of creation myths represent the struggle between the forces of chaos (female) and order (male), with the triumph of the male god as an explanation of today’s present condition (Neumann, 1955; Eisler, 1988, 1995; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Matthews, 1992; Markale, 1999). Feminists assume the Great Goddess as matriarchal. This attitude remains problematic as the same patriarchal paradigm is being recreated. Ancient society is embedded in nature and as such nature and man did not stand in opposition to each other, each is acknowledged by the other.

4. **Mythic facts and historical facts**: Modern myth makers are represented by theologians, scientist, historians, sociologists, and psychologists etc, all of whom are
inclined to believe that what they are constructing is truth, not just another myth (O’Connor, 2000, p.1). The pseudo-history in Irish mythology is a defining trait of early Celtic literature beginning in the 6th century when Irish monks tried to adapt the myths to a Christian construct tracing their genealogy back to Noah (p.3). Research demonstrates that it is the mythical seer whose image stands behind much of the learned lore of early Ireland, evidence to the origins of this personage must be sought in remote antiquity (O’Donohue, 1999). Irish mythology is representative of the tension between the masculine and feminine forces, specifically the hero and the universal feminine alongside of the land and nature (O’Connor, 2000, p.21). The earliest depiction of this tension occurred in the Mythological Cycle containing both mythological and factual material, thereby compiling Irish pseudo-history (p.21). The cross-fertilisation of Celtic literature spread its way across Britain into all areas of literature from the ancient Irish to medieval Welsh sources, taking in the legends of the Grail story which remain popular in the collective psyche today (Devlin-Glass, 2001; Matthews, 2002a; de Motte, 2003). Feminist religious studies has seen in recent years a revived interest in the mythology of the ancient world (Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Elster, 2017; Eisler, 1993, 2000; Mathews, 1992, 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Long, 1992; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Gimbutas, 1989). The multi valence of these ancient stories allows them to be read by women in changing circumstances. After all much of the great literature of the past that has survived represents a reinscribing of even more ancient myths within new frameworks, reflecting changing times and new understandings of the world (Lee, 2001, pp.199-200).

5. **Technologies of Power** are technologies devised by the gatekeepers. Religious practice requires places of worship in the form of temples or churches where ritual observances can be practised. While oral traditions relied on memory requiring only one word to stimulate the imagination in the creation of a story, today we rely on computers as keepers of our memories and knowledge while we mourn the loss of the true poets who created the living word. Technology itself is not bad, it is how it is used and manipulated by the power brokers to subjugate the masses that is the issue.
6. **Palimpsest** is representative of a “something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form” (Oxford University Press, 2019). Merriam-Webster (2019) notes palimpsest is “something having usually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface”. An argument for palimpsest within the thesis supports the presumption that male biased ethics of a patriarchal nature have altered, subverted, and scraped away every aspect of the ‘Feminine Principle’. The Divine Mother is supplanted by the patriarchal monotheistic god of Judeo/Christianity; all of the feminine attributes, both visible and invisible, are taken up by the patriarchs and Church Fathers as their own. It is now the male who defines human life through divine creativity: there is no Divine Mother or woman involved. Man defines himself the Mother of the Woman who brings forth life just as the human mother brings forth life from her body.

**Research Theory**

This thesis draws on the following scholarly concepts to advance my argument:

a) **Religious Education Theory:** The notion of Religious enquiry is diverse, however Lovat (1989, 2019); Pirner (20199; Graham (2019); and Alexander (2019) advance the arguments set forth by German philosopher Jurgen Habermas which presupposes “any area of study reveals three distinct types of human interest which leads to a way of knowing” (Lovat, 1989, p.32). Lovat writes “Habermas made much of the notion of ‘praxis’. This was what critical reflection led to, a combining of theory and practice with a view to change (p.33). Lovat proposes that it is only through ‘praxis’ that breaks down barriers or a “whole new structure is put in place as a result of new lights going on in people’s minds” (p.33). Bearing this in mind whatever aspect of religion is studied it is therefore essential that an accurate picture is being gained (p.33). The arguments ascribed by Graham (2019); Alexander (2019); Pirner (20190; Day (2019); Kim (2019) and Lovat (2019), point to a ‘Public Theology’ for religious pedagogy and education. Drawing on the philosophy of Habermas Pirner refers to Public Theology and the term of “Public Religious Pedagogy can serve as a paradigmatic conceptual frame in which the public responsibility of religious education as well as the intersections between
Public Theology and education can be discussed” (Pirner, 2019, pp.4-5). Religious Pedagogy focuses on the links between religion and education (p.39). Ali writes “Public Theology aims at making theology and religion relevant to the social order to help spiritualise or re-spiritualise it; in addition to, or in conjunction with, the resources of history and sociology, political theory, psychology etc” (Ali, 1995, p.2). Research from Graham outlines that “new waves” of religious faith pose challenges for the way we “think, legislate, and behave in relation to religion (Graham, 2019, p.13). As researchers Bird and Scholes argue we gather, organise, evaluate, translate, interpret, re-represent and communicate information about religion (Bird, & Schole, 2013, p.1). We have a moral obligation to ensure ethical integrity in our efforts to produce and disseminate knowledge about religion and religious life (p.1). Nel Noddings adds her voice to the debate noting Religious Education has a duty of care to ask the tricky questions in regard to the investigation of Educating for Belief or Unbelief (Noddings, 1993).

b) **Patriarchal Theism**: The term ‘Patriarchal Theism’, as coined by Laura and Chalender (2012), proposes that the dominant conceptualisation of a god reflects a patriarchal understanding and ordering of the world that has led to gender elitism. Moreover, a pretext exists within the Bible for describing the world and divine events that take place in it which, explicitly and sometimes implicitly, encourages a way of thinking about nature and women that presupposes the superiority and authority of men over both.

c) **Transformative Subjugation**: is a theory conceptualised by Laura and Cotton (1999) suggesting that systems and technologies are designed to take the living things found in nature and transform them into inert, synthesised, artificial environments. This process also extends to human relationships by way of our theory of knowledge utilised as power and designed to separate, dominate and control, thus transforming both nature and humanity into inert lifeless objects with increasing predictability. Therefore there is an urgent need for a new philosophy for Religious Education grounded in the nurturing of human spiritual development rather than knowledge as a means for power to dominate and control.
d) **Empathetic Epistemology** is a theory developed by Laura and Cotton (1999), arguing that we have lost our sense of belonging; unity is found within all of the cosmos and nature. Our planet lives and breathes just the same as the human body; all are harmonious and interconnected. Fear brings isolation and separation and this is particularly evident in all forms of fundamentalism: if we challenge the gatekeepers, the cost is exile. Love and acceptance are necessary as opposed to fear and judgment, power and control. Man has a habit of demonising that which he does not understand; rather than embrace the ‘other’, he seeks to devalue, dehumanise, and destroy, through his own fear.

e) **Archetypal Theory:** Jung (1975) advocated the theory of universal archetypes by way of which re-occurring images become part of our human genetic makeup i.e., we inherit these images through collective memories which reside in the unconscious (Neumann, 1955; Jung, 1975, Segal, 1998), our genes and DNA (Stevens, 1982). Archetypes come out of subconscious activities that are inherited, universally expressed, and keep on occurring throughout all cultures, taking shape in myths, legends, stories, art, writing, dreams (Campbell, 1971, pp.60, 67, 94). Certain ones are repeated over and over again throughout the millennia, that are expressed in different ways but embody essentially the same basic archetypal images which Jung identified (Jung, 1975; Campbell, 1971, p. 94). Jacobi (1959) notes “every human being contains the totality of archetypes whether they are actualised or not” (pp.58-9). On this point, Freud and Jung differ: Freud asserts there are no archetypes, “myth originates and functions to vent sexual wishes lingering from childhood. Myth stymies psychological development” (Segal, 1998, p.45). However, Jung and Freud do agree that myth must be interpreted symbolically (Segal, 1998). James Hillman (as cited in Segal, 1998) alleges that it is the ‘soul’ rather than ego that experiences archetypes through myths as “myth serves to open up to the soul’s own depths” (, p.45). In like manner, Hillman draws on the complexities and etiology [cause] of myth (p.261), according Greek and Roman myths as dysfunctional in relationship to other cultural myths.

f) **Feminists Theory and Spirituality:** Numerous books and published articles offer theoretical arguments for feminist theory and spirituality (Baring & Cashford 1991;
Eller, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Eisler, 1995; Christ, 1997; Devlin-Glass & McCredon, 2001; Percovich, 2004; Ruether, 2005; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Christ, 2018a; Christ, 2020). Women looked for a new form of spirituality, Anne Baring (2015a) a Jungian analyst, historian and feminist, recognized that the dominant traditional religion in Western culture is highly problematic, Baring seeks to foster a more feminine-valuing ecological, and ethically based religion. Feminist spirituality (Eller, 1993) has its roots and branches in many places including Christian and Jewish feminism, neo-paganism, political feminism, alongside the New-Age movement and Native American Indian spirituality (Eller, 1993, p.viii; Starhawk, 1999; Guiley, 1989). The movement is centered outside traditional religions, forming part of an alternative religious milieu (Eller, 1993, p.7). Feminist hermeneutics assert for a ‘Thealogy’ not ‘Theology’ (Trible, 1973b; Fiorenza, 1985; Ruether, 1989, 1998, 2012). ‘Thea’ has its origin in the Greek root thea, the feminine for divinity as opposed to a male divinity implied by the word ‘theology’. Fiornza contends feminist exegesis treats Biblical studies with a “hermeneutics of suspicion”, in view of the fact that women are set apart by men, through the agency of “creational difference” (Fiorenza, 1985, p.7). The traditional image of God supports patriarchy, while nature is a metaphor for women, created to serve men’s interest, to have power over, to be covertly expropriated and exploited, to be controlled and subjugated to suit the purpose of Man.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1: When God Was a Woman

Chapter one outlines the early stages of the Great Mother or Goddess of Beginnings and the evolution of the Feminine Principle. The study points to a time prior to patriarchy, when the Feminine Principle was worshipped as God and Mother (Neumann, 1955; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Markale, 1999; Ruether, 2005; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Christ, 2018a). In order to make this explicit, this study will be drawing on the philosophy of religious traditions as subject matter, while exploring a cross-cultural array of material including creation mythology, historical and archaeological evidence to support a heuristic in arguing for God as Mother. If we explore the ancient origins of
human civilisation and the initial development of religious patterns, we find that the worship of the Goddess is a natural occurrence as many of the creation myths throughout the world have, as their original creator, the Great Earth Mother, or the Goddess of Beginnings. The Mother Goddess is to be found at the foundation of most civilizations given, the oldest myths match the observations of the ethnologists (Gimbutas, 1989, 1991; Holland, 2005; Elster, 2007, 2015; Voth, 2010; Hale, 2010; Christ, 2017a). In the beginning, humanity was convinced that women were mainly responsible for procreation, and the first divine being worshipped was the Mother Goddess (Anwyl, 1906; Markale, 1997; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Christ, 2018a). The Feminine was worshiped for thousands of years before the term ‘Magna Mater’ (Markale, 1999; Roller, 1999). The term ‘Great’ expresses the symbolic superiority of the archetypal figure in relation to humanity and nature in general. The archetype of the Great Mother is powerful, yet a gentle healing force who speaks to both men and women. This chapter will detail research from many feminists, feminist theologians and philosophers, historians, archaeologists, psychologists and classicists who point to a time-frame which precedes patriarchy, promoting a culture of gender-based equality.

Chapter 2: In the Beginning

Chapter two follows on from chapter one in the examination of creation myths taking into account the creation myths found within the Book of Genesis in relation to other Creation Myths. The chapter will also examine the gendered polemics by way of which the Feminine Principle with its association with the Great Mother is maligned over time by patriarchy. In due course, the Great Mother or Goddess of Beginning gives birth to her son who becomes her lover and consort (Neumann, 1955; Briffault, 1969; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eliade, 1981, 1996). In due course their relationship changes from one of partnership to the overthrow of the Mother by her son thus becoming the all powerful Sky God. This narrative was taken up by Judaeo/Christianity whereby mythic thinking becomes historical fact (Coote & Ord, 1991; Dimont, 1962; Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Laura & Chalender, 2012). Western metaphysics lacks all the qualities of the Feminine, as God now makes the heavens and the earth. While the ancient Mother was heaven and earth; Genesis sets up a hierarchy which splits off from nature and spirit, whereby the divine is transcendent to creation, thus situating a precinct for historical and psychological ramifications of the devaluation of the Feminine.
Psychologist Carl Jung succinctly argued that myth is a projection of the collective unconscious where dreams are related to the self or the collective group images or archetypes (Jung, 1975). Judaeo/Christianity sets up an anti-pagan polemic whereby violence and war become part of mythic thinking and existence, justified by male hegemonies. The implications of these mythologies will be explored in detail in chapter three: creation occurs through the spoken word, not from the fecund womb of the Mother Goddess.

Chapter 3: The Power of the ‘Word’ - Metamorphoses of a Myth

Picking up from chapter two, chapter three continues the exploration of the devaluation of the Sacred Feminine and the downfall of the Great Mother whereby the spoken word replaces the fecund womb: creation becomes a technology (Shlain, 1999; Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Laura & Chalender, 2012). The creation language of Genesis is a language of craftsmanship and technology by way of which God as potter, moulds and shapes his creation into being. Not only has the Goddess been annexed in favour of a masculine deity, but also women themselves become subjects to be dominated and controlled. The invention of the alphabet and the written word negated the creative feminine aspect of the right brain, being replaced gradually by masculine rational thought, dualism and left brain logic (Shlain, 1999). The introduction of literacy brought about the demise of the feminine archetype, thus giving religious authenticity to an emerging socio-political system. For the first time in history, the image of the Feminine is removed from the godhead, resulting in the priesthood of the One-god ideal, who deny women access to the comforting aspects of the benign goddesses who cared for women’s reproductive health and children (Graves & Patai, 1965; Gaines, 1999; Christ, 2018a; Christ, 2018c). Celtic mythology provides a salient example for equality among the sexes - here the narrative is dominated by the archetypal feminine, she is both creator of the land, and the land itself (Ellis, 1995; Markale, 1999; Matthews, C. 1999, 2002; Devlin-Glass, 2001). It is the primordial Feminine which shapes the gods and the heroes of the stories, manifesting out of a sense of connected and interconnectedness, not Logos and separation. By providing the counter example of Celtic mythology, chapter three is able to demonstrate the link between patriarchal theism and written language.
Chapter 4: Genesis - Eve: the Metamorphoses of a Myth

Chapter four continues the downward spiral of the Feminine Principle, and the implications for women in light of the prevailing Biblical and patriarchal influences. The creation myth of any culture has a profound effect on both the social and political mores of that culture. Within Western exegesis, Eve has been promoted as archetype for all women who have followed her (Lerner, 1986a; Knapp, 1997; Norris, 1998; Pagels, 1979; 1988; Laura & Buchanan, 2012). As secondary in creation, Eve is presented to Adam as an afterthought, a helpmate to provide him with sons. In this respect she is not an independent person; her role is to be subservient, obedient, and aware of her second-class status. As sacred text, Genesis does not affirm a woman’s personhood, but sets up a paradigm of gender hierarchy to suit a patriarchal ideal. The snake, once associated with the Goddess of Beginnings is not an evil thing, but a symbol of life energy and regeneration, turned by Christianity into a symbol of evil, blaming Eve as well as the serpent for the downfall of humanity (Arthur, 1984; Barnstone, 1984; Baring & Cashford, 1991). The Divine Feminine was recognised within the bounds of Gnosticism; however, Gnostic Christianity was branded as heresy by the Church Fathers (Brakke, 2015; Pagels, 1979, 1988; Arthur, 1984). The history of Eve and her daughters is a Judaeo/Christian development of both rabbinical and early Church Fathers in their reworking of earlier myths promoting women as evil, sexually corrupt, and the cause for Adam’s downfall, all of which is justification for blame and intimidation (Phillips, 1984; Ruether, 1990). Rape, shame, and pornography become technical tools of violence: sexual intimacy is something to be feared, rather than pleasurable (Eisler, 1995; Eller, 2010; Baird & Gleeson, July, 2017). Sexuality belongs to a sinful world. On the other hand, in the wake of the #Me Too Movement, women are finding a voice, they always had a voice, but now they are being heard (Jeffries, 2018). In this regard, the Biblical creation story, found within Genesis, has had a major impact on all three religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - as their primary means for revealing and defining the basic attitudes and values: those in particular concerning women.

Chapter 5: And Her Name is Wisdom

Chapter five examines women as seers, oracles, prophets, and those women who fall in between who have been maligned and scape-goated by an androcentric agenda (Young,
In this sense, sacred text, love-poems, ancient literature, all are examples that promote a time when the Feminine Principle was associated with Wisdom (Long, 1992; Qualls-Corbett, 1988; Matthews, 1992, 2002). Male-centred bias misappropriated the innate principles of the feminine by subsuming Wisdom into logos, or word of God (Arthur, 1984; Pagels, 1979, 1988; Long, 1992). The 4th century saw the Emperor Constantine remove all things pertaining to the Feminine from Biblical text as there was only room for one God (Eisler, 1988). Monotheism emerged out of the Middle East promoting a theology of uncompromising intolerance and fanatical attitudes towards any other forms of religious practice (Gaines, 1999). The same form of fanaticism is carried out in the ‘burning times’ when free thinking women were burnt at the stake by overzealous Church Fathers (Denike, 2003). In contrast, the Irish Celtic traditions provide an exemplum for strong independent women who are associated with visions, prophecy, and foresight. The difference between knowing and understanding the precepts of a culture is the fact that the Irish clergy did not display any hostility towards these women or folk beliefs (Lysaght, 1986). The title of this chapter has been taken from Proverbs. Obscured by Judaism, the Shekinah is Feminine Wisdom; as the Feminine aspect of God, she is imminent in creation, pervading and penetrating all things, though found in the Book of Wisdom, her insight has almost been forgotten (Long, 1992; Matthews, 1992; Johnson, 1994; Christ & Plaskow 2016; Christ 2018d; Kim, 2019).

Chapter 6: The Ordination of Women as Equals

Chapter six is a culmination of all the chapters, starting with the explication of the institutional hubris and power-brocking of the Catholic Church in the wake of the current sex scandals that have affected the Church, by the duplicitous behaviour and actions of priests, bishops and cardinals on men, women and children (Jackowski, 2004; Litonjua, 2018; Yallup, 2007, 2010). Women are the backbone of faith communities and yet women have no face in the Church. Why? Because Eve is representative of all women, born second from man, and last within the male hierarchy, women do not fit within the framework of a male god. After all, she was born in sin, male exegesis forbids her to teach the gospel, or give the Eucharist, as she is not in the image of Christ (Ruether, 1981, 1998, 2012; Wijngaards, 2001). The entire tradition of the Church has been built upon the notion that only ‘man’ through his natural resemblance to Christ, can perform
sacerdotal functions (Ratzinger, 2004). The paradox being that Jesus surrounded himself with women, as noted in Chapter 5. Women have become all too aware of the images that society has used and continues to use against them. Women bleed and are therefore a pollutant; they have to deny their sexuality in order to be like a man, and as an ascetic, gain any form of acceptance (Swan, 2001). In this respect, the Bible defines a point of view together with a political manifesto for the one God. Religious institutions have vested interests, are power based inasmuch as research has shown they need to be open to new ideas. Public Theology is a means to explain religiously based sexism by making religion and theology relevant to the social order, in conjunction with the resources of history, sociology, political theory, mythology, psychology, and anthropology. You can learn a lot about what is excluded, rather than what is included within Biblical text. In chapter six these views are explored in further detail and the implications for contemporary Religious Education spelt out.
Chapter 1: When God Was a Woman

Introduction

This study proposes to track the evolution of the Feminine Principle as a spiritual and philosophical concept as well as a mythical, historical and archaeological event. Another key component is to show how the ancient Mother Goddess is an exemplum of the archetypal feminine (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Neumann, 1955). The presumption and goal of this chapter herein is to show how the Feminine Principle emerged, free from the vestiges of patriarchal influences, out of a specific epoch, starting with the growth of the universal ‘Great Mother, Great Goddess, or Goddess of Beginnings’ of ancient times. The objective of this chapter is to also give an explanation of her feminine influence upon humanity, and how masculine centred ethics brought about her demise throughout the oncoming centuries. Patriarchal influences have obscured her role, and it will be the burden of this chapter to explicate this process and uncover her story.

Once this aim is achieved the following chapters will explore the advantages of a spirituality that incorporates the Feminine. In order to make this explicit, this chapter and consecutive chapters will explore the philosophy of religion as a subject matter that encompasses a broad array of cross-cultural material, as well as material drawn from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Ample evidence (Christ, 2018a; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Campbell & Rossi, 2013; Coleman, 2005; Markale, 1999; Matthews, 1992; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Stone, 1971), points to a time which precedes patriarchy, when the Divine Feminine was worshiped. Students need to be aware that our ancient ancestors co-created an incredible tapestry of cosmologies, also the sacredness of nature, to honour the earth, to take care and respect all of life.

What Became of God the Mother?

The goal of this chapter is to track the evolution of the Feminine Principle as a spiritual and philosophical concept as well as a mythical, historical and archaeological event.
The presumption here is to show how the Feminine Principle emerged, free from the vestiges of patriarchal influences, out of a specific epoch, starting with the growth of the universal ‘Great Mother or Goddess of Beginnings’ of ancient times, her influence upon humanity, and how masculine-centred ethics brought about her downfall throughout the oncoming centuries. Patriarchal influences have obscured her role, and it will be the burden of this thesis to explicate this process and uncover her story. Once this aim is achieved, the thesis will explore the advantages of a spirituality that incorporates the Feminine.

In prehistoric times the primary feminine representation is illustrated by the “Great Round” (Neumann, 1955, p.19), the “I Am” (Douglas-Klotz, 1995, p. 107), or “Spirit of One”, (p.119), depicted as the Divine Feminine, through the symbol of the circle from which the creation of the “All” (p.110) is realised. Many feminists (Baring, 1991; Eller, 2010; Gadon, 1989; Coleman, 2005; Christ, 2020), reason that this time-frame prior to patriarchy is pointing to a matriarchal culture. Nonetheless, this argument remains problematic as the evidence is considered inconclusive (Ruether, 2005). Psychologists (Neumann, 1955; Jung, 1975; Baring & Cashford, 1991) posit that there is a parallel between myths and dreams, as they form archetypes that communicate both to the conscious and unconscious self. The ancient Mother is the archetypal feminine (goddess, authority to family and society) given that she is “the essence of human motherly love” (Fromm, 1978, p.58). From a psychological perspective, Erich Fromm (1978) suggests a mother's love is unconditional and all protective in so far as it is not controlling or acquired. All men are equal because they are children of a mother, and by extension contends Fromm, they are “children of the primordial Mother” (p.124).

When writing on the ‘matriarchal period’, Erich Fromm noted that it aroused violent antagonism and suspicion, based on an emotional prejudice against an “assumption so foreign to the thinking and feeling of our patriarchal culture” (Daly, 1973, pp. 92-90. Erich Neumann’s definitive work on *The Great Mother* is the established point of reference for contemporary scholars. Nothing has been written since by modern writers that compares with his lengthy text. Neumann proposed the term, “Great Mother”, is a partial dimension of the archetypal Feminine: the “Good Mother” and the “Terrible Mother” make up the other two aspects (Neumann, 1955, p.11). The Feminine, states Neumann, was worshiped for many thousands of years before the appearance of the term “Magna Mater” (Neuman, 1955, p.11; Roller, 1999). The term “Great,” expresses
the “symbolic superiority of that archetypal figure” in relation to humanity and nature in general (p.11). In his seminal work, Erich Neumann (1955) argues convincingly that:

*the problem of the Feminine has equal importance for the psychologist of culture, who recognises the peril of present-day mankind springs in large part from the one-sidedly patriarchal development of the male intellectual consciousness, which is no longer kept in balance by the [feminine] world of the psyche...Western mankind must arrive at a synthesis that includes the feminine world...Only then will the individual human being be able to develop the psychic wholeness that is urgently needed if Western man is to face the dangers that threaten his existence from within and without* (xiii).

In this respect, myths are the bearer of metaphysical truths about humanity’s existence; thoughts and beliefs which speak to us in symbols, allegories and metaphors (Jung, 1975). Creation myths therefore have their basis in ancient wisdom, and represent an evolution of human consciousness (Neumann, 1955; Jung, 1975; Baring & Cashford, 1991). Creation myths are also a metaphor for the collective unconscious relating to the world, while remaining pervasively influential (Jung, 1975; Leeming, 2002). Myths are powerful, since they have the potential to explain a specific instance like the creation of the universe envisaged as an instance in time and space in relation to what came first (Leeming, 2002, p.5). Because the archetypal Feminine is the essence of the cosmos (Neumann, 1955, Jung, 1975), the ancient Mother Goddess is the representative of the union of opposites in the act of becoming, manifesting out of herself (Markale, 1999; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Neumann, 1955). In this sense, the character of a specific myth is not as important to realise as the power of the myth itself, as many creation myths are functional in affirming a culture’s values and practices (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Leeming, 2002). Conceptually, the study concerning the relationship between men and women in the West lies in the classical myths of antiquity (Detienne & Vernant, 1978, p.107).

A new theme emerges with the shift in consciousness from a time of unfolding union to one of patriarchal reasoning. The act of creation is reversed: the Great Mother is no longer the bearer of life, death and rebirth, life is no longer circular as the hero and gods of mythology demand immortality (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Campbell, 1973). In essence, mythology affirms that it is now the male sex that brings forth life, hence the
unnatural birth of Pandora, Lilith and Eve (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1988). When looking at the evidence sourced from Genesis, one could not suppose that the world and those who populate it had been generated by a male god given that the mythology of Genesis bears a close affinity with male-bearing ontological and functioning aspects of Greek, Phoenician, Hittite and Ugaritic, as well as Sumerian bodies of myth, yet pious Jews and fellow Christians fail to see or admit the connections (Graves & Patai, 1965, p.14; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). The creation stories found in the Book of Genesis, undercut the presumption of earlier myths between the interpretation of human and divine. The “I” and the “Thou” are replaced by “the first and foremost epistemology of thought, I think, therefore I am”. Cosmology is rendered secondary, rational thought replaces Nature (Miles, 1996, p.9).

Students should be exposed to feminist critiques of the myths of Creation, and the Fall, after all there are conflicting stories found in Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2, feminist have a very different view to the Hebrew and Christian traditions (Fiorenza, 1984, 1985, 1999; Ruether, 1983, 1989. 2005, 2012; Noddings, 1993; Christ &, Plaskow, 2016, Frankenberry 2018; Christ, 2020). In Genesis 1:27 man and women are created as equals, but in Genesis 2, woman is now born from man: the familiar biological story is inverted (Fiorenza, 1984, 1985, 1999; Ruether, 1983, 1989. 2005, 2012; Noddings, 1993; Christ &, Plaskow, 2016, Frankenberry 2018; Christ, 2020). Noddings states “there are students who have not been exposed to Goddess traditions or other creation stories” Noddings, 1993, (p.8). Such ignorences can be addressed by means of Public Theology which can spell out theological controversies as well as the more general features of religion (Lovat, 1989, 2019). Fiorenza contends women are set apart by men due to “creational difference” (Fiorenza, 1985, p.4). If we accept Fiorenza’s premise, then it is possible to argue that RE has institutionalised religiously orientated sexism.

We have put our own 20th century spin on the Bible in the hope that the mythology of the ancient world can be reinscribed to fit within new frameworks, reflecting our changing times within the world. Following this line of reasoning, I propose that a shift in consciousness within RE is vital, namely, that a new image and understanding of God needs to transpire, a new paradigm of wholeness, a joining of a sacred partnership between the masculine and feminine principles. The ‘Feminine’ refers to the complimentary face of God which remains absent in Judaism, Christianity and Islam,
the three major Abrahamic religious traditions of today. In contrast, and at a deeper level, Celtic mythology protects and reconceptualises the Feminine Principle as the representation and renewal of women in myth and society. In Celtic mythology (Matthews, 1992, 2002a; Ellis, 1995; Markale, 1999; O’Connor, 2000; Devlin-Glass, 2001; Concannon, 2005; Fee & Leeming, 2016) it is only through the act of sacred-marriage to the goddess-queen that the hero learns the ultimate knowledge of life, ‘for the woman is life’ (O’Connor, 2000, p.28; Campbell, 1973, p.153). In this light, Celtic spirituality is beautiful, yet brutal, one needs the other to go to the very edge of darkness before the light of spiritual inspiration can emerge (O’Connor, 2000). The removal of the Feminine from creation represents a ‘Fall’ from wholeness to a duality of good and evil. It is self-evident that the Feminine Principle represents the very essence upon which the foundation of all life is based.

In this sense, a new line of reasoning is imperative to our current understanding of each other and our planet. Spiritual feminists envision a world of connection and relationship, the connection of humanity and Nature and the presence of the Divine in Nature and a positive valueing of the body. A considerable change is essential in the way people think and act morally, and ethically, towards each other and towards our environment. Students need to be aware of the sacredness of nature, to honour the earth, to take care of, and respect all life. This suggests a need for a new paradigm of knowledge on the one hand, and reason on the other, which epistemically reflects the Feminine Principle within our interaction with the world around us. In this light, eco-feminists (Plumwood, 1993; Eisler, 1988; Ruether, 1994; Merchant, 1980) have reconceptualised the theory of knowledge as knowledge is still expressed through the patriarchal paradigm. Cudworth (2005) writes “the point of eco-feminism theory is to map the connections, the means by which formation and practices of difference and domination interlock” (Cudworth, 2005, p.32; Capra, 1996, p.9). Fundamental epistemology, or separatist feminism, combined with patriarchy, all have their own agendas being caught up in dualistic thinking and binary rules, carving out their own niche by playing the same dominator paradigm. In a socio-cultural and moral context, both radical-feminism (Noddings, 1992; de Motte, 2003; Denfield, 1995; Daly, 1973) and patriarchy have a choice to change or continue to reinvent the wheel of ‘them’ and ‘us’ attitude by playing victim or power politics. Scholars have shown (O’Murchu, 2013; Noddings, 2012; Coleman, 2005; Baring, 1991) that it is essential to be open to
new ideas; you change the narrative by changing the thinking from one of a blaming, separatist, radical-feminism, or patriarchal utopia, to a model which encompasses both men and women.

Simply put, the argument advanced here affirms that a new paradigm shift within Religious Education is essential so that the West’s masculine consciousness might come to terms with the Feminine - with the mystery of all life. Within the midst of a religious and cultural environment in which ‘God’ is primarily understood as He, it has been found that there is a major gap within the curriculum concerning the feminine aspect of the divine. Holland (2005) suggests that “the major tenets of the Goddess theory must be recognised as unproven, yet scholars too often do not consider the contribution of women to religious culture. Evidence of early goddess-worship, should lead historians to take the feminine aspect of religion seriously” (pp.53-54). Ruether (2005) notes that the redevelopment of goddess theology serves as a redemptive alternative to the “long dark days of violence from which we currently suffer” (p. 299). The evidence gathered herein supports the conclusion that the long silenced voice of the Feminine must remerge.

**God the Mother**

Following on from the above conclusion, research from Holland (2005) demonstrates that “religion is a human concern with, and a response to, the supernatural, the mysterious, the unknown - in other words with everything that seems to lie beyond the human capacity to understand” (p.26). The figure of a creative being is practically if not absolutely universal in the mythologies of the world, mythic narratives are the sacred stories of religion (Leeming, 2003, p.8). Religious people have always assumed that their sacred stories are both unique and different from myths (p.9). Leeming (2003) notes certain thinkers, such as Carl Jung, Mircia Eliade, and Joseph Campbell are three of the best known writers on mythology suggesting that:

*both definition of myth, as illusory stories and containers of eternal truth, are valid simultaneously. For these thinkers, the sacred stories are products of the imagination, but are nevertheless in some sense true in ways that history cannot be. Eliade emphasises that so-called myths are regarded by believers as ‘true history’ because they are concerned with realities* (Leeming, 2003, p.9).
German theologian Rudolf Otto, 1869 to 1937, devoted an entire book to the essential nature of religious concern, which he called *The Idea of the Holy*. Otto (1959) takes into account “feelings” both rational and non-rational, as a means of expressing the numinous in human experience, “in religion...rational and non-rational are...intimately woven together” (p.10). Otto reasons, that both fear and awe are the “starting point for religious development in history” (p.27). Religious awe acts as a means of expressing terror, or exalted holiness and this blending is represented in the Indian pantheon by Durga, “the Great Mother of Bengal” (p.77). Durga is both Great Mother and Terrible Mother, in this sense the holy is an “a priori category” of the facts in the history of religion, that beings, obviously born originally from Durga, out of awe and “terror, become gods” (p.153).

The Feminine Principle is central to human symbolism and, as such, from the beginning bears the character of ‘greatness’ evident in the case of the human mother (Neumann, 1955, p.43). Neumann’s (1955) argument is to show how “the Feminine appears ‘great’ because of what is contained, sheltered, nourished, is dependent on it and utterly at its mercy” (p.43). He continues “if we combine the body world equation of early man in its first unspecific form with the fundamental symbolic equation of the feminine, woman = body = vessel”, we arrive at a universal symbolic formula for the period of early mankind:

Woman = body = vessel = world (p.44).

If we look at Neumann’s equation from a quantum, theological viewpoint, the Feminine (woman) as vessel creates from within, and without, every part contains the totality to which it belongs, since the whole acts or is acted upon in the part (O’Murchu, 2013, p.79, Neumann, 1955, p.44). Likewise, if we apply the same exemplum to our relationship with the universe, O’Murchu (2013) illustrates how “we are parts of a whole, much greater than the sum of its parts, and yet within each part we are interconnected with the whole” (p.7). It follows that the Feminine symbol of the Great Round is “the world-containing and world-creating uterus, in which the real, the corporeal, and the material are formed by the Great Mother her-self” (Neumann, 1995, p.227).
The archetype of the Mother is a powerful, yet a gentle healing force who speaks to both women and men. The term ‘Great Goddess’ or ‘Great Mother’, is a partial aspect of the Archetypal Feminine: the Good Mother and the Terrible Mother make up the other two aspects (Neumann, 1995, p.11). Neumann points out how it is relatively late in the history of mankind when the Archetypal Feminine is designated as the ‘Magna Mater’, as the Feminine is worshipped for many thousands of years before the appearance of the term ‘Great’, which expresses the “symbolic superiority of that archetypal figure in relation to humanity and nature in general” (p.11). In this sense, every woman embodies the archetype of the ‘Great Mother’ with the potential to create life from within herself, she is the manifestation of the Goddess, ensuring survival not just of women but of men as well (Orr, 1997, p.14). Men, on the other hand, cannot bring forth life from their own bodies, despite what their gods may be able to do (p.14).

In his book, *The Web of Life*, Fritzof Capra (1996) points to quantum physics as a way of defining our world, and Nature, as a “complex web of relationships between the various parts of a unified whole” (pp.30-31). If we apply Capra’s theory to the Great Mother, utilising the metaphor of the spider and her web, it would suggest as she creates from within, spinning her web from without, she is connecting the entire universe (Doniger, 1998, p.62). The metaphor advanced here is to demonstrate an ethic of wholeness that all of life is sacred and interconnected.

**Historical and Archaeological Evidence**

Differing opinions are developed by academics over a single artifact: namely the female figurines from the Palaeolithic and Neolithic era (Fontaine, 1990; Von Petzinger, 2016). Holland (2005) writes there are four sources of information available to us on the religion of the Great Goddess: archaeological evidence; non literary writings; literary sources; and, literary representation (p.23). Holland sheds light on the Upper Palaeolithic era (c.30,000 - 17,000 years ago) where the first exaggerated female figurines made of clay were found; he then explains how “the [figurines] seem to be associated with fertility rites, perhaps, and some sort of cult mother, or divine mother of some sort...and abundance and the stereotyped nature of these very carefully made...
figures indicate some awareness of the full range of human life, from birth all the way through to death” (p.46)

At Altamira, France, in 1878, a group of figurines or statuettes were discovered; they were called Venus figurines, named after the Roman goddess of erotic love, beauty and sexual abundance (Hale, 2009, p.39; Holland, 2005, p.37; Voth, 2010, p.183; Markale, 1999, p.4). Research from various scholars notes that the figurines are found across Ice-Age Europe and Siberia; the Near East, the Mediterranean region generally and, Malta in particular (Hale, 2009, p.39, Holland, 2005, p.37, Voth, 2010, p.183, Markale, 1999, p.4) and as far north as the Orkney Islands (Scarre, 2017, p.877) indicating a strong representation of female worship. Hunters modelled small images of women often carved out of ivory with exaggerated female anatomy: broad hips, shapely large breasts and buttocks, legs descending to a point (Hale, 2009, p.39, Markale, 2009, p.35). Sometimes the genitalia are very carefully marked out but the faces are blank, ergo not representative of a portrait (Hale, 2009, p.39). Hale points out “the figurines are portable [easily] pushed into the ground to preside over the place of offering or ceremony or prayer, a request from the person who was using it” (p.39).

Hale describes how “at the end of the Ice Age - Cro-Magnon hunters of the Upper Palaeolithic era create religious paintings in Lascaux [a] cave in France...figurines were not normally found in caves but at campsites where people lived”, (Hale, 2009, p.39, p.236). He continues by saying:

*a slab of stone was discovered on which there was a woman a mother-goddess figure - she is holding aloft in her hand a ram's horn, an animal's horn, which appears to be both a symbol perhaps of abundance as in our own cornucopia, that full horn of plenty which was the symbol of later goddesses of abundance, but in her case also an emblem of power that this is a being who transcends ordinary human powers (pp.39-40).

The female figurine is found painted on walls, on little stone plaques in small scenes, in one she is mating with a male while on the other side depicted in high relief “she sits holding a child on her knee” (Hale, 2009, p.40) reminiscent of Isis nursing the infant Horus (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.267), and later, the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child (p.568). James Melaart, cited by Hale (2009) In Exploring the Roots of Religion,
excavated the Neolithic site dated 10,000 – 12,000 years ago, of Çatalhöyük in southern Turkey (Anatolia), only a fraction of it has been completely excavated (p.58). Inside a grain bin Melaart found one of these little moulded “Earth Mother” figures (p.58). Hale (2009) continues, “she is planted in the grain bin to show us exactly what her domain present is, imbuing this site with a sense of sacredness of the earth itself to the early farmers” (p.58). The little Venus figurines that were carried around during the Ice Age have taken on a new role of Mother Earth, out of which comes the grain to support the people, “she is the ancestor of the familiar classical goddess Demeter” (p.66; Roller, 1999, p.30). Viewed this way, Joseph Campbell (1960), advises, “the female figurines are the earliest examples of the female body experienced in its own character as a focus of divine force, and a system of rites dedicated to its mystery” (p.313).

On this subject, Yarnell (1994) Transformation of Circe notes the statues of heavy breasted, large buttocked, wide-hipped mother figures seated on their thrones, flanked by leopards, or other great felines are representative of the Great Goddess in her guise as Lady of the Beasts (p.36). The ignominious Greek Goddess Circe, by her association with wild animals, is related to the very ancient female statuettes found in the Neolithic settlement mounds of Çatal Hüyük and Hacilar (p.36). Rabinowitz (1998) writes in The Rotting Goddess how there is archaeological and iconographic evidence of the ancient Goddess Hekate and her links to the Palaeolithic site of Çatal Hüyük as her great temple at Lagina is only 200 miles away. Situated in the temple is an archaic seated figure which seems to mirror the Great Mother of Çatal Hüyük “we cannot help but suspect a certain continuity” (p.17). Hesiod informs us that “detailed features of Hekate are lost in the backward and abysm of time” (p.17). Regarding these very ancient female statuettes, Walter Burkert, the contemporary historian of Greek religion, has observed that “their association with the Asia Minor Great Mother of historical times, with her leopards or lions...is irresistible. Here we have overwhelmingly clear proof of religious continuity over five millennia” (Burkett as cited in Rabinowitz, 1998, p.36).

On a different note, Ehrenreich (1998) argues for gender bias, suggesting the Venus figurines are not fertility figures because some of them appear not visibly pregnant while the cave drawings of males appear in stick form with exaggerated erections and are “never interpreted as fertility figures” (p.102). Ruether (2005) adds her voice to the debate noting that her students were offended by the notion that the prehistoric societies
which only valued a woman’s body as sources of sex, and nurture, did not value women’s personhood or agency (p.3). Until then, Ruether had looked upon the figurines as testimony of a positive view of women in ancient societies (p.3). In contrast, Russell (2006) and Meskell (1998) adopt an entirely different view of female figurines found in Palaeolithic Europe. Russell cites a lack of archaeological evidence - she doubts “that these artworks were all meant to symbolise an obsession in the Ice Age with fertility, pregnancy and procreation” (Russell, 2006, p.2; Meskell, 1998, p.60). Russell (2006) adds that the figures are “good luck charms” or “early erotica for men to touch and fondle” (p.2). Her attitude towards the voluptuous Venus of Willendorf is flippant, to say the least, as she compares the body of the figurine to:

modern teenage member of Weight Watchers somewhat too plump, but certainly not pregnant nor a mother...the connections made between these physical features and fertility are distinctly dubious...that female-body-shape in itself, without other indicators, is not enough to make judgements about a possible state of pregnancy or frequent motherhood...that the female figures have eaten too much and too well” (pp.9-10)

Meskell takes a similar approach arguing that the most famous prehistoric Anatolian figurine, dating from the 7th millennium BCE is:

the famous seated figurine flanked by leopards, which supposedly shows childbirth should be seen as doubtful. As for female imagery, the protuberances, usually termed breasts, bears no correlation to female breasts portrayed in other visual media., and may in fact represent the heads of smaller animals...there is no evidence to support the notion of matriarchy, let alone the presence of a universally worshiped ‘Mother Goddess’ at Çatalhöyük (Meskell, 1998, p.60; Roller, 1999, p.14).

Christ (2020) notes. the most ancient images are from the Palaeolithic era, it is from the Neolithic Old Europe (Christ, 2020; Von Petzinger, 2016; Elster, 2016), archaeologists freely made comparisons between figurines found in disparate cultures, drawing on essentialising notions of femaleness or a universal psychology (Leasure, 2011). Christ argues that the most important, yet controversial figure in the study of gender, and women in archaeology, is the work of Marija Gimbutas (1982; 1989; 1991) (Christ, 2020; Elster, 2007, 2017; Lesure, 2011). Elster (2007, 2017), and Christ (2020),
recognise that Gimbutas “is a foremost example of this approach”, she looked at the ‘big picture’ (Elster, 2007, 2017; Lesure, 2011; Christ, 2020). In Marija Gimbutas: Setting the Agenda, Elster notes that her research has played a key role in women’s studies and in feminist thought generally, and her ideas have had an impact well beyond the borders of the academic world (Elster, 2007, p.83; Elster, 2015; Christ 2020). She is recognised as a pioneering researcher in Old Europe, her critics had difficulty in accepting her ideas of Old Europe’s matrifocal organisation and the “longue durée” that she postulated for the pantheon (Elster, 2017, p.101; Christ, 2017; Christ, 2020; De Meeo, 2006, 2013; Campbell, 2013).

Towards the end of her life she described herself as an archaeo-mythologist, her research combined her knowledge of myth, folklore and archaeology, all were inextricably woven. Her last years were devoted to writing and lecturing which had come as a result of her ‘Goddess’ publications all of which had an impact on feminism research and popular culture (Elster, 2007, p.85). Her critics regarded her work as being unscholarly, however as Christ argues in Marija Gimbutas Triumphant: Colin Renfrew Concedes, Lord Renfrew, who had been one of her most vociferous antagonists and a powerful gatekeeper, concluded the inaugural Marija Gimbutas Lecture at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago with these words: “Marija [Gimbutas]’s Kurgan hypothesis has been magnificently vindicated” (Christ, 2017, p.2). In his lecture, Renfrew cited new evidence based on DNA analyses found in the ancient bones of the ‘Yamnaya people’ who had entered Europe from their homeland north of the Black Sea, thus scientifically proving Gimbutas’s Kurgan hypothesis. He upheld her idea that a new population element, most likely speaking an Indo-European language, entered Europe at the time she postulated. Renfrew further stated that little research had been done on DNA of ancient bones (p.3).

Reconstructions of ancient cultures and text by academics are neither free from bias, or preconceived opinions while determining their excavations. For that reason we may see varying interpretations of a single artefact: namely the ‘Venus’ figurines. Scholars who are experts in their fields of endeavour, including the history of religion, mythology or archaeology prefer to espouse a dismissive approach to a complex religious system.
Background to the Veneration of the Great Goddess

It is interesting to note, when scholars write about the feminine Goddess religion they refer to it in the negative as a fertility ‘cult’ rather than religion, which is rather intriguing given the distribution and longevity of her “cult” (Eller, 2000; Young & Nathanson, 2010). Another problem, as Ruether astutely points out, is our Christian culture in the interpretation of the nouns God and Goddess (Ruether, 1983, p.47). Being a Goddess is considered less divine and less sacred than being a God (Stone, 1971, p.5). This study suggests that the three Abrahamic religions promote male superiority, inasmuch as male dominated religion qualifies for more kudos than Goddess religion which is promoted as being pagan (Fiorenza, 1992, p.84). Viewed this way, Stone (1971) reasons the “rituals associated with Judaic-Christian Yahweh (Jehovah) were always respectfully described by scholars as ‘religion’. It was upon seeing the word ‘God”, and even ‘He’, each time carefully begun with capital letters, while ‘queen of heaven’, ‘goddess’ and ‘she’, were most often written in lower case” (p.9).

Eckhart Tolle (2009) writes:

Many ancient cultures instinctively chose female figures or analogies to represent or describe the formless and transcendent reality...women ‘embody’ the Unmanifested.
What is more, all creatures, all things must eventually return to the Source...Since the Source is seen as female, this represented as the light and dark sides of the archetypal feminine in psychology and mythology. The Goddess or Divine mother has two aspects: She gives life and she takes life (pp. 164-165).

This can be observed in the archetype of the ‘Terrible Mother’ as representative of the dark and negative character of the Feminine (Cochrane, 2001, p.150; Neumann, 1955; Jung, 1975). The symbol has its history in the unconscious mind of humanity, appearing in dreams and nightmares in the form of monsters, witches and ghouls, vampires, all of which are exceedingly terrifying (Cochrane, 2001, p.150).

Scholars have provided ample evidence in support of Goddess worship and religion, embedded in the Palaeolithic era, continuing through to the Neolithic period (Holland, 2005, pp.46-55), continuing through the Classical period of Greece and Rome, and seeing a revival in our own 20th century (Ruether, 2005; Eisler, 1995; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Starhawk, 1999; Lerner, 1986a). The disappearance of the feminine
from the sacred, perhaps, goes someway to explaining why Christian religions position women as they do. Christ (2018e) notes, religion is intrinsically bound up with the abuse of girls and women. Across the globe women and girls escaping from the wake of war are trafficked as sex slaves; fleeing war torn homelands they are targeted, “tricked and sold into prostitution” (Christ, 2018e, p.5). The Bible is cited by religious leaders in support of patriarchy, while women endure violence because they are creationally different (Fiorenza, 1985). Ruether succinctly notes that Christianity, Judaism, Islam and even Asian religions seek to beat women back into ‘their places’ by force if necessary, as well as by various methods of blame and shame (Ruether, 2005, p.6; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Christ, 2018a).

One would argue that this form of theology does not speak to a woman’s experience, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1895) argues in her opening to the Woman’s Bible, “the canon and civil law; church and state; priests and legislators; all political parties and religious denominations have alike taught that woman was made after man, of man, and for man, an inferior being, subject to man” (p.7).

It seems generally to be accepted, notes Stanton (1895) that creeds, codes, Scriptures and statutes, are all based on this idea, which in turn influences customs relating to society, and church ordinances (p.7). Stanton further notes that Lord Brougham called attention to the disgrace of “civilisation and Christianity of the 19th century” pointing to canon law, which is responsible for women’s status in the church (p.7). She also identifies Charles Kinsley (as cited in Stanton, 1895) as saying, “this will never be a good world for women until the last remnant of the canon law is swept away from the face of the earth” (p.7). With this in mind, come forward to the 20th century and consider has anything changed? I would argue absolutely nothing: Trible (1973a) notes that Biblical exegesis represents “tales of terror” (p.1). Fiorenza notes feminists approach Biblical exegesis as “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Fiorenza, 1985). Moreover, Christ and Plaskow (1992) identify traditional religious teachings of the West as “having betrayed women” (Christ & Plaskow, p.1; 2016). Women are still considered to be in a state of punishment for sin (Rossi, 1993, p.1), therefore unsuitable, and inappropriate for ordination (Beatie, 1999, p.1). Meehan, Doko, and Rue (n.d., p. 1) write in A Brief Overview of Woman-priests in the History of the Roman Catholic Church, of how “inspired by our ancient sisters who have gone before us as apostles,
deacons, priests, bishops and leaders in the church, we embrace our call to live Christ’s vision of Gospel equality in the 21st century” (p.1). The voices of Laura and Chalender (2012) add “to debate so jaded a topic as the ordination of women is a sad but revealing commentary on the theological presumptiveness of patriarchy which informs and conditions modern Christianity, with few exceptions” (p.176). The nature of this topic will be argued in detail in Chapter 6.

At this juncture I would like to draw the reader’s attention to the concept of palimpsest as afore mentioned: how the rise of patriarchy and divinity as male transcendent ‘Other’, which has engendered patriarchal theism as the dominant power, has altered and subverted all aspects of the ‘Feminine Principle’ by embracing and absorbing such principles as their own Weltanshauung. In the meantime, the Catholic Church still excludes women from the priesthood judging them to be “inferior to men by virtue of the fact that their rational souls were housed in female bodies rather than male ones, and they were therefore incapable of symbolising Christ as the embodiment of perfect humanity” (Rossi, 1993, p.1).

Rossi states that half of the human race is excluded from the basic tenet of “personhood” (p.1). Women are perceived as being less than human, being open to violent abuse, having to submit to her husband in every conceivable way, while at the same time she is made to feel that she is the cause of the abuse, by sharing in Eve’s guilt (p.1). “Wives submit yourself unto your husbands, as it is your duty in the Lord” (Col.3:18).

Laura, Buchanan and Chalender add their voices to the critique of the devaluing and diminution of the ‘Feminine Principle’ by pointing out ‘gender elitism’ is the result of ‘patriarchal theism’ “which explicitly, and sometimes implicitly, encourages a way of thinking about nature and women” (Laura & Buchanan, 2012; pp.171-175; Laura & Chalender, pp. 175-183). John Shelby Spong (2005) points out in his Sins of Scripture, how a “whole theological system” has been built on this premise by the Christian Fathers (p.91). Just as Jews are God’s chosen people, note Laura and Chalender (2012), “so this patriarchal mandate affirms that man is God’s chosen gender” (p.175). In his work Greater Than You Know, Peter Phipps (1997) proffers “Judaism, Christianity and Islam do not balance the masculine and feminine qualities of the godhead” (p.203).
There is a problem within these three religions since they do not address the Feminine face of God.

On this point, Phipps (1997) notes patriarchal ideology originated a long time ago within Hebrew notions; was rectified by the teachings of Jesus; reverting back to patriarchal thinking once the “Church Fathers” gained control of Christianity (p.204). Jesus’ teachings embodied many qualities of the “Feminine”, a viewpoint that was fundamentally ignored by the Church Fathers and feminist extremists (p.207). It is not unreasonable to say that the patriarchs of Judaism, and Church Fathers had an agenda in the elevation of the masculine at the expense of the Feminine in the promotion of a higher spiritual world. By limiting our view of history to the written word, scholars of the Old Testament have served patriarchal interests well, because societies for which there are substantial and decipherable written records were and are patriarchal (Christ, 2018d; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Antonelli, 2004; Johnson, 1994; Shlain, 1999; Ruether, 1994; Ruether, 2005; Trible, 1973b).

**Defining the ‘Feminine Principle’**

I have argued that the Feminine Principle is a philosophy based on wholeness, non-dualism, and personhood, rather than the rational, dualistic metaphysics that permeates our culture today. In this sense, the Feminine Principle is the untapped subtle potential that lies at the very core of our being, and it must be realised to restore the balance and harmony between intuition and intellect, feelings and facts, alongside of reason and realism. It is therefore fundamental to our spiritual, emotional, and psychological wellbeing that the Feminine face of God be restored to the Godhead. The loss of the Divine Feminine from consciousness is a wound which we all carry. Without her dimension of love and justice we exile ourselves from the earth, from physicality and from each other. In our Western culture there is no goddess myth, and therefore no collective image of the Feminine as Soul, or as Divine. Within the human mind the first example of the sacred is conceived in the archetypal Feminine as God, as Mother. That being said, there is no longer an experience of the archetypal Feminine image as a sacred entity that once could be drawn upon. Recognition of the feminine principle by theologians would mean the recognition of the entire natural world and Nature as Mother.
Noddings (1993) notes women are reclaiming and re-signifying women’s history, some have turned to Goddess religion (Noddings, 1993, p.71). Students, suggests Noddings, should be introduced to the current literature on the Goddess movement “first, the movement is intellectually, politically, and spiritually fascinating; second, its literature provides insight into the developmental possibilities of women; and third, it presents a powerful connection to current ecological interests” (p.71). Devlin-Glass and McCreddon focus on the importance of myth as a rereading and reconstructing of women’s history towards women’s empowerment (Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001, p.18, Lee, 2001, p.199). The male voice has dominated Biblical text (Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Frankenberry, 2018; Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Antonelli, 2004) if we consider the male gender has written about women, their views are considered normative. The scriptures promote dominating male symbols, pronouns, nouns, language, all of which confere male-centered hermeneutics (Christ & Plaskow, 2016). The theory of Matriarchal societies has been advanced by feminists (Christ, 2020, 2018a; Elster, 2007, 2015; Campbell & Rossi, 2013; Gimbutus, 1989, 1991) but this theory remains controversial because of the polarisation of gender. Just swapping the images of the divine will not work. Simply put, the fabric of the Divine must be a partnership: man and woman, male and female are necessary to creation.

In Western culture the Feminine aspect of the Divine is painfully absent from our lives, and our spirituality. Lerner’s study has found “God and humanity assumes as given, the subordinate position of women, and their exclusion from the metaphysical covenant, and earthly covenant community, their only access to God and the holy community is as mothers” (Lerner, 1986a, p.10). Similarly, Aristotle found the female body to be “imperfect not whole like the male” (duBios, 1988, p.184; Florenza, 1984; Noddings, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Ruether, 2005; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). Symbolically, duBios (1988) suggests “the erect phallus acts as the transcendental signifier that establishes male wholeness to which the female body is compared as defective – the symbolic pre-eminence of the male organ is a historical fact, not a universal description of culture” (p.187). In stark contrast, Wood (1985) argues in Genesis: the First Book of Revelation, “if all matter created was the work of the Almighty the vagina of the female was clearly a gateway to the tunnel which would link directly to Him” (p.266). When we turn our focus to individual human life, the foetus, in its act of becoming is yet to be realised, lying in the womb of the mother, before consciousness emerges from the mysterious
mystery preceding it. Wood describes how the human mind carries the memories and knowledge of the past within the collective unconscious:

*not the knowledge of creation...but the record of the dawn of intellect which is available to everyone of us may be the secret of creation itself...As the mind of the embryo grows, it is fed with the story of its ancestors; further and further back to the creation of primordial thought. All that has ensued since the first moment of intellectual awareness is known to it and so interwoven is the labyrinth of the interbreeding of our species that this program is almost identical for every one of us...then the waters break ...[all is] a distant memory...for which you must search your mind* (p.276).

As Neumann (1955) has so eloquently written, “…in primordial mysteries, the Feminine [as Principle] – whose nature we have attempted to discern in symbols and functions of its elementary and transformative character – assumes a creative role and so becomes the determining factor in early human culture” (p. 282).

Reed (2009) assumes a different stance in *The Myth of Women’s Inferiority*, by arguing women are treated as second-class citizens for becoming mothers, “it is class society that has...placed the primary emphasis upon their [woman’s] animal functions of maternity...motherhood is represented as a biological affliction...being [seen as] something almost mystical” (p.2). Patriarchy has devalued woman of her most significant value in the “phenomenon of giving birth” (Ruether, 1983, p.177). However, men’s loss of blood due to circumcision, or in the case of war, is all powerful and redeeming, while ‘blood’ shed by women, “becomes a dangerous pollutant” (Ehrenreich, 1998, p.111). Ruether draws attention to theological arguments which focus on sexual intercourse and childbirth: being touched by a woman with a flow of blood was to suffer instant contamination (Ruether, 1974b, p.1; Baile, 2003). Leviticus 12:1-5 warns men of the fact:

*When a woman has conceived and given birth to a boy, she shall be unclean for seven days, with the same uncleanness of her menstrual period...and then she shall spend thirty-three days more in becoming purified of her blood; she shall not touch anything sacred or enter the sanctuary till the days of her purification are fulfilled. If she gives birth to a girl, for fourteen days she shall be unclean as at her*
menstruation, after which she shall spend sixty-six days in becoming purified of her blood (Lev:12:1-5).

In the West, the demise of the Feminine begins historically with the story of Genesis, man (male) is not part of the birthing process despite what his god may be able to do, and creates in other ways thus inverting the natural process of life. Birth is a miracle: now - only God can perform miracles. In their article *Patriarchal Theism*, Laura and Chalender (2012) point out that it is God, who makes a human, in his own likeness and image, who is preferably male, “Adam is not born of a woman or goddess; he is a direct and pure creation of God” (p.176). Another key component to this ‘gender elitism’ is that there an exegetical bias in the assumption that Adam and Eve, that is man and woman, are not necessarily created equal. In this respect, the Genesis Creation Story “can be construed as a patriarchal manifestation of gender status which defines God in the Judeo-Christian religion is built not simply upon the theology of monotheism, but on a misogynistic theology which declares that there can be only one God and the one God must be male” (p.182). In this sense, “male Monotheism” which is primary to the foundational tenets of Judeo-Christian religion, arguably is a contributing factor to the litany of collective-prejudices, and discriminations suffered by women around the globe (p.182).

**Woman as Mana Figure**

In *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Eliade (1996) notes that regarding the structure and morphology of the sacred, ‘mana’ is representative of “a mysterious active power” which belongs to some people or “something other...anything possessing mana on the ontological level is for that reason efficacious, fecund, [and] fertile” (pp.19-23). On this point, Neumann argues “it is important for the basic understanding of the magical efficacy of woman as a mana figure to bear in mind that woman necessarily experienced herself as subject, and object of mysterious processes, and as vessel of transformation” (Neumann, 1955, p.291). Hereof, in prehistoric religion life is meaningful, at an “ontological level” the power of life is tied up somehow with woman’s mysterious power to give birth hitherto, women become symbols both direct, and indirect sources of life (Holland, 2005, Pt. 1, p.65). Childbirth is understood as being an exclusively
female enterprise, in early times the role of the male was not known, over time childbirth became a model for the fertile female earth that provided sustenance for her children (Pt. 1, p. 65). Looking at the feminine archetypically, Neumann (1955) points out that the archetypal Feminine as Goddess and Great Round becomes the numinous principle of worship, first as animal form becoming human goddess, “the animal stands as an attribute and her instrument”, the vessel becomes a corresponding symbol of the Feminine, “her attribute and instrument” and in this instance, fundamental to transformative magic (p. 287). The Great Round is the world-containing and world-creating uterus, in which the real, the corporeal, and the material are formed by the Great Mother herself (p. 227). The figure and essence of spiritual transformation within Celtic traditions is the Goddess of Sovereignty, and later in the 12th century Grail legends she appears as the Grail Maiden (C. Matthews, 2002a, p. 142).

The significance of the argument is born out in Matthews (C. Matthews, 2002b) Sophia, Companion of the Quest, as she affirms the narrative is “a direct descent from the ancient and holy belief in sovereignty, as the personification of the land, married to her rightful king” (p. 142). The Grail Maiden is a reflection of the once potent image of the Divine Feminine taken over by patriarchy yet the Feminine Principle remains (p. 141). In Celtic Rees and Rees describe how Sovereignty Goddesses play an integral part in king-making stories, this sacred union of kingship and land is one of the major features in all Celtic traditions (Rees & Rees, 1961, p. 115, Matthews, 2002b, Markale, 1999; Devlin-Glass, 2001). If the king is in harmony with his duties, and obligations, the land and people flourish, however, if he neglects his duties the land will become a barren wasteland (Rees & Rees, 1961, p. 115). This becomes a familiar theme in later Grail legends. What’s more, the relationship between the king and the Goddess of the Land is reciprocal as his success is dependent upon her (Rees & Rees, 1961, p. 115, Matthews, 2002, p. 139; ). Their relationship is symbiotic, and holistic, not dualistic as in other cultures whereby the male god took control over the creative powers of the female, by subsuming them as his own, as in Greek mythology and the incorporation of the Feminine Principle by Zeus.

The roots of the Grail tradition lie in Celtic mythology where the vessel, or cauldron is an image of re-birth, renewal, and fertility (Morgan, 2011, p. 18). From the archetype of the cauldron the corpus of Celtic myth culminated in the mysticism and quest of the
Grail Legends. With the spread and also growth of Christianity across Europe, there arose a fascination with a miraculous vessel, or cup, that was associated with the Eucharist or Holy Communion, demonstrated as an act in remembrance of Jesus Christ (p.21). Themes of Christ’s sacrifice, death and rebirth, together with the promise of eternal life, are central to this ritual (p.21). Morgan notes, “from around the 4th century onwards the role and meaning of the Eucharist was to develop and change quite radically and prove a major influence on Grail romances of the 12th century” (p.21).

During the medieval period a corpus of literature was produced recounting the story of Britain, King Arthur and his knights, which has come to be referred to as “the Matter of Britain” (Morgan, 2011, p.22). Geoffrey of Monmouth (as cited in Morgan, 2011) in The History of the Kings of Britain (1136) compiled an influential piece of work basing his sources on Nennius, a 9th century Welsh monk, whose work he mentions several times (Morgan, 2011, p.23). Geoffrey is considered to be the first author to elevate Arthur from a powerful military leader to a king (p.22). Chrétien de Troyes, a French medieval romance writer, puts forth evidence of the Grail mythology while appearing in a Christian framework, which later writers would underline (pp.24-26). In this context Christianity denied all aspects of the Feminine, turning the cup of Christ into Christian symbolism within the bounds of Grail mythology (C. Matthews, 2002a, pp.137-151), hence turning the Arthur legend into apocryphal Christian propaganda having no real association with the Cup of the Last Supper.

**Matriarchal Theory as a Corpus for Forgotten History**

Modern myth makers are represented by theologians, scientist, historians, sociologists, and psychologists etc, and all are inclined to believe that what they are constructing is truth, not just another myth (O’Connor, 2000, p.1). In this context, many feminists assume the Great Goddess as matriarchal, yet this attitude remains problematic as the same patriarchal paradigm is being recreated. Ancient society is embedded in nature and as such nature and man did not stand in opposition to each other, each is acknowledged by the other. Myth is archetypal, timeless, and eternal (Yarnell, 1994, p.5) inasmuch as the writings of Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor found “myth records the real history of the ancient preliterate world” (As cited in Eller, 1993, p.166). Eller
(2010) rejects this line of argument by stating that “mythical evidence…provides no real support for the proposed prehistoric patriarchal revolution in relation to women’s lives” (p.179).

In her work *Living in the lap of the goddess: The feminine spirituality movement*, Cynthia Eller (1993) provides a comprehensive rendition of feminist spirituality without any disparaging comments. Despite her congeniality, in her book, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory*, Eller alters her previous argument considerably by claiming feminists apply matriarchal theory as corroborative proof for women’s “former [patriarchal] dominance” (Eller, 2010, p.178). However, Kristy Coleman points out how Eller makes a shift from “friend” in 1993, to “foe” in 2000 , inasmuch as she wants Goddess spiritual practitioners to admit that the hypothesis of a matriarchal prehistory is totally implausible, and a complete myth (Coleman, 2001, pp.247-248). Eller seems to forget that to the Goddess revival movement, Goddess veneration is a religion, “scholars do not demand that Christians admit the passion story is ‘myth’, so why must this group” (p.248).

In his lectures *Religion in the Ancient World*, Holland indicates how the significance of the Neolithic Mother Goddess has sparked considerable debate amongst scholars (Holland, 2005, p.53). Some archaeologists, (Gimbutas, 1989; DeMeo 2006, 2013; Gimbutas as cited in Elster, 2015; Melaart, 2009) and historians (Burkert as cited in Rabinowitz, 1998; Holland, 2005; Voth, 2010) have suggested that these ages may have been “matrifocal (woman-centred) or even matriarchal”, characterised by gender equity, minimal violence, and a unity with all of nature (Holland, 2005, p.53; Hale, 2009, p.55; Voth, 2010, p.183). An argument could be put forward on the idea that the matriarchal myth has been used as a charter for former female dominance. In his *Histories*, Herodotus tells us the matriarchal myth came from “the legends that referred to female-led societies such as the Amazons who the Scythians called Oeorpata, the equivalent of mankillers, oer being the Scythian word for man, and pata for kill, women lived in all female societies capturing men for procreation” (Herodotus tran, 1965, pp.306-8). It is Yarnell’s considered, but unproven theory that the Circe/Odysseus myth as described in *The Odyssey* of Homer, addresses the shift from goddess religions to the Olympian pantheon and from the matrilineal to patriarchal organisation of society, which occurred sometime in the Mediterranean and Aegean prehistory (Yarnell, 1994,
Lacking written records and insufficient archaeological evidence that often remains teasingly ambiguous, Yarnell’s hypothesis may not convince the unconverted. Yet if it is true, “it gives the encounter of Circe and Odysseus a very large foreground, one particularly relevant for our time when perogatives of gender-based power are again shifting and eroding” (Yarnell, 1994, p.3).

Circe first appears in the Homeric myth The Odyssey and her story has had remarkable staying-power and influence upon Western literature (Yarnell, 1994, p.1). Circe is an image of the strong, beautiful woman who has power to give both shape and form. She has the power to turn men into swine, while the men still retain their human mental faculties, and later, she turns them back to human form only this time, they become a younger former self. She is the archetypal character that appears again and again: She offers both “debasement and deliverance, a new life in the flesh” (pp.2-3). Circe is a central figure, dwelling at the core of the Odyssey: she first appears in book 10, when it is first her home, and her “lilting song” that attracts Odysseus and his men (p.9). In book 10 she becomes, as Joseph Campbell (cited in Yarnell, 1994) remarks, a “mystagogue”, instructing him in the details, and dangers that will follow him on his journey home (p.9). As Lady of the Beasts, Circe is related to the very ancient female statuettes found in the Neolithic settlement mounds of Çatal Hüyük and Hacilar (Yarnell, p.36). Regarding these very ancient female statuettes, Walter Burkert (cited in Yarnell), the contemporary historian of Greek religion, has observed that their “association with the Asia Minor Great Mother of historical times, with her leopards or lions...is irresistible. Here we have overwhelmingly clear proof of religious continuity over five millennia” (p.36).

In 1861 Johan Jakob Bachofen’s Das Mutterrecht, (The Mother Right), extended our understanding of matriarchy (Bachofen, 1967, p.xv). Bachofen based his views largely on reading myth as a memory of reality (Bachofen, 1967, p.xv; Goodison & Morris, 1998, p.7; Campbell & Rossi, 2013; Fee & Leeming, 2016; Bamberger, 1974; Stuckey, 2005), noting that myth is the “exegesis of the symbol” (Bachofen, 1967, p.48). Bachofen’s hypothesis developed out of hetaerism, “a state of sexual promiscuity”, to the “rule of matriarchy” noting it was “man’s nostalgia for the rule of women” (p.xviii). To support his theory Bachofen makes reference to the Homeric goddesses Circe, Nausicaa, Calypso, also Penelope as being not submissive, unlike Olympian
deities who are deferential to Zeus, conforming to the Apollonian rule of patriarchy (p.xx). While this is concordant with the facts, Bachofen accredited the rule of patriarchy to be a natural transition (p.xx). Hirvonen, in *Matriarchal Survivals*, appropriates the arguments of both Bachofen and Briffault adding the *Homeric Epics*, and the Finnish *Kalevala* as evidence of a pre-existing matriarchal culture (Hirvonen, 1968, p.16). Their factual background is examined for matriarchal modes of thought, attitudes and traditions, “variants of the text are compared with ancient critics to reveal their trends and to draw conclusions” (p.16). Sometime later Jung appropriated myth in his understanding of “archetypes” and the “collective unconsciousness” (Jung, 1975, p.9). In *Jung on Mythology*, Segal (1998) identifies Jung specifying archetypes are primordial images that are repeated over and over again through the genre of myth (p.7).

According to Jung, myth and its symbols are expressed through archetypes forming the collective unconscious by way of which archetypes represent the psychic image of us all (p.7). Goodison and Morris (1998) opine that “In the early twentieth century while Sigmund Freud was presenting his theories about sexual feelings of the male child for his mother...Robert Briffault’s *The Mothers* (1969) helped a male academic consensus” (p.7).

Ruether (2005) notes the concept of an original matriarchal society, superseded by a patriarchal society was a product of the 19th century (p.3). Scholars such as Tyler and Morgan (cited in Goodison & Morris) added their weight to the theory of female power, and Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, produced a mammoth work on religious thought (Goodison & Morris, 1998, p.7). Markale (1975) in *Women of the Celts*, adds his voice to the discussion by noting “traces of earlier matriarchy (we use the word with caution) in the old custom in Irish and Welsh literature of naming of heroes after their mother and not their father...Definite traces of matrilineal descent were still remembered by the story tellers” (pp.37-38).

Celtic society represents a totally different concept from the repressive male dominance of classic Mediterranean society.

The hypothesis of matriarchy has been strongly contested by many scholars however, DeMeo proposes an entirely different argument for matriarchy. He asks “what happened to change the world so dramatically for the worse, to produce the big mess in which so much of humanity finds itself today” (DeMeo, 2006, p.3, 2013). In *Saharasia*, DeMeo
(2006) attributes climate change in transforming people’s emotional and social attitudes, so-called ‘matrist’ cultures are peaceful, child treatment and sexual relationships are pleasure orientated, society is democratic, egalitarian, sustaining very low levels of adult violence, and as such devoid of “patrism” or patriarchy (p.4). According to DeMeeo’s (2006) independent review, “archaeological and historical evidence shows no clear, unambiguous traces of patrism, [or patriarchy] anywhere on Earth, before approximately 5000BCE, and no significant, lasting traces until around 4000 BCE. He also states, “Only peaceful, unarmoured matrist traits can be inferred from the oldest, deepest layer of archaeological materials” (p.8).

The Dominant Legacy – War as an Ethos

In her book Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth and the Politics of the Body, Eisler notes that archaeological evidence demonstrates a shift in pre-history from matrilineal to patrilineal societies (Eisler, 1995, p.88). Data in support of this evidence is verified by the disappearance of the female figurines as increasing proof of warfare (p.88). Eric Fromm (1978), argues, the God of Genesis is the God of war. Fromm ties Goddess religion to that of motherly love as it is “unconditional and all protective, all-enveloping” because it is “unconditional” and based on “equality” (p.58). The issue of power is closely related to warfare: O’Murchu (2013) refers to the use of power in a “masculine, rational, competitive, and compulsive manner, that leads to the subjugation of people by others...trying to play God” (p.155). They assume that in God’s name they will do what is best for all, thus failing to recognise the shadow side to God’s power, which O”Murchu opines “often manifests in barbarity, crime, destruction and warfare” (p.155). Collectively, Christian and Islamic fundamentalism represent a separatist ideology which presumes to know the truth, while everyone else is wrong (O’Donohue, 1999, p.363). In O’Murchu’s (2013) words this is evidence of a “perverted religious ideology” (p.154), while being dangerous and destructive, presuming to know the truth, while expecting others to follow (O’Donohue, 1999, p.363). American president George W. Bush saw terrorism as an “axis of evil” whereby “evil” is incarnate, embodied as the “infidel” and an “enemy of God” which is central to the “historical and rhetorical campaigns” and “propaganda machinery of self-righteous warfare against strategically
chosen scapegoats for the greater glory of God” (Victor, 2005, pp.16, 36). Armstrong (2014), in her text *Fields of Blood, Religion and the History of Violence*, notes: “as we - quite rightly - condemn those terrorists who kill innocent people, we also have to find a way to acknowledge our relationship with and responsibility …[for]…the hundreds of thousands of civilians who have died or been mutilated in our modern wars for simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time” (p.358).

As our cultural values have shifted over the centuries, perhaps we should spend more time telling stories of lives disrupted, bodies mangled, nature trampled, and moral identities shattered. In this sense Knapp (1997) contends “great myths of the ancients may or may not hold us in their grip…But aspects and thematic of ancient myths are timely today, and may answer our yearnings and help alleviate our terrors” (p.xix). Noddings (2012) posits in her book *Peace Education*, how “relevant stories are widely available, but rarely included in the school curriculum, and when they are read the focus is rarely on this theme” (p.2). For example, most students read part or all of the *Iliad* (p.2) the story reflects all the gory details of war, targeting the heroes and their lust for blood. Within the text, Andromache remonstrates with her husband Hector on the walls of Troy that he “is possessed”, he does not think of his wife or small son as causalities, and commodities of war when he goes out to fight the Achaeans; he orders her to: “Go therefore back to our house, and take up your own work, the loom and the distaff, and see to your handmaidens ply their work also; but men must see to fighting” (Homer Trans. 1961, Book VI, 11, pp. 490-492).

Ehrenreich (1998), while commenting on war, notes that war, is in fact, one of the most rigidly “gendered activities known to humankind...In this view war becomes an inevitable outgrowth of male aggressiveness, with weaponry, the thrust of spears and missiles, the piecing and explosions, all mimicking the phallic side of sex” (p.125). Walker (1985) documents “War [a]s the ultimate male ego trip...Through loot and rape, the traditional prerogatives of the warrior they can argument the minimal rewards their leaders give them” (p.172). Dying a heroic death is promoted exponentially by the system for male-empowerment; if one reads through mythology, history, alongside theological books of various religions the narrative is dominated by a political ethos, promoting a philosophy of bloodshed, and violence in the world rather than peace. Armstrong (2000) argues that technology supports the war-machine and as such will not
bring peace. Fundamentalism, notes Armstrong is a religious phenomenon of the 20th century. I would argue that religious fundamentalism and fanaticism is a by-product of embedded patriarchal theism, from which militant behaviour is promulgated by the patriarchs and Church Fathers towards women and those who are different. A common complaint about the monotheism that emerged in the Middle East is that its theology bred uncompromising intolerance (Shlain, 1999, p.7), as will be made explicit in the case of Jezebel, and Hypatia which will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

Clearly, September 11, 2001, marked a day that changed the world, to underline this point Armstrong (2003) proffers: “the American Christian fundamentalists Jerry Falwell and Pat Roberston almost immediately proclaimed that the tragedy had been a judgement of God for the sins of the secular humanists in the United States – a viewpoint that was not far removed from that of the Muslim hijackers” (p.xiii).

Reston (2005) argues that fundamental terrorism is born out of the “historical resentment of the Islamic world against the West; tied to the Christian Crusades of the 11th and 12th century, and also the 15th century battle between Catholic Spain, and the Moorish caliphs of Granada” thus creating a precedent for “a holy war between Christianity and Islam” (p. xviii). The West today is familiar with the “ascription” of evil to identify “befouled” groups or those who manifest difference or deviation: those who reject the notion of One God – One Church – One State (Victor, 2005, p.16). Religious and political institutions are guilty of inciting war and hatred of the ‘other’, humans kill in God’s name and advocating God is on our side. Ehrenreich (1998) argues: “The Old Testament-style thunderings of the ‘Christian right’ are only a particularly florid version of the civil religion shared by the great majority of Americans. Since the end of the Cold War, America's quasi-religious nationalism has continued to thrive without a 'godless' enemy - without a constant enemy at all - nourished by war itself” ( p.221).

Fear cripples faster than any implement of war, acting on the subconscious, history has shown that victory can never lead to peace while man searches for a scapegoat. If we consider the hermeneutics of the Old Testament the writings propagate the innocent slaughter of thousands of people by Yahweh, for example: Genesis 7:21-23; Exodus 12:29. Exodus 22:17; Exodus 22:19, Numbers 16:41-49; Numbers, 31:7-10; Numbers 34:14: “For by fire and sword the Lord will execute” (Isaiah 66:6).
Another example of indiscriminate slaughter takes place in Exodus 11: 5, hitherto the malicious murder of innocent children and the butchering of harmless animals all carried out by Yahweh, god of the Hebrews: “Every first-born in this land shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh on the throne, from the first-born of the slave-girl at the hand-mill, from the first-born of the animals” (Exodus 11:5).

Noddings (2012) contends Christianity, Islam, and Judaism all have bloody histories; Hinduism and Buddhism too have supported violence; she then explains how “genuine education should include an appreciative and critical examination of the role played by religion in both advocating peace and not supporting war” (p.5). I would argue that we have an obligation to honour each other for our differences inasmuch as peace cannot be restored until the Feminine Principle is reunited with her masculine counterpart then, and only then, will peace be realised. Reconciliation is achievable in an educational sense, with the move toward the study of Public Theology which strives for the common good, a Public Religious Pedagogy can serve as a paradigmatic conceptual framework in which the public responsibility of religious education as well as the intersections between Public Theology and Public Education can be discussed (Pirner, 2019, pp.4-5). Students should be fully made aware of feminist theology and spirituality alongside of traditional theology, that is, acknowledging the Feminine principle within Goddess traditions, rather than staying within the boundaries of the dominant religious epistemology that has sought to repress all female symbolism of the divine.

This theme of war is analysed not just by theologians but also by psychologists. Alford (1998) proffers in *Freud and Violence*, how Freud wrote on the struggle between Eros and death, between “the instinct of life, and the instinct of death” (p.64). British theorist, Jacqueline Rose (1993) in her book *Why War*, writes: “War brings us face to face with our own inner darkness, the destructiveness we fear in ourselves...in conditions of war, however, individuals and groups are easily overcome with paranoia and megalomania, projecting the destructiveness we fear in ourselves onto the other, the alien” (p.103).

Another contributing factor, according to Ehrenreich, is that Freud was eventually led to conclude that there is some dark flaw in the human psyche, a perverse desire to destroy, countering Eros and the will to live (Ehrenreich, 1998, p.8). Clive Hamilton (2011), Professor of Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University, argues convincingly in that historically men are hard wired to kill (p.1). Maguire adds “male behaviour is prone to
assaultive modes of behaviour...[with]...the ability to do violence to others is built in (Maguire as cited in Ruether, 1983, p.179). Walker (1985) argues that “under a patriarchal system men need a reason for dying; death in war is seen as a heroic death, which is determined by chieftains and the military war-machine” (p.122). War binds the young into the service of older males, although many get broken and destroyed in the process (p.122). During this time, Walker (1985) contends, there is a firm belief that God is on the side of the righteous, therefore condones any degree of violence (Walker, 1985, p.122; Noddings, 1993; Christ & Plaskow, 2016, Christ, 2020). Arguably, men in war are damaged and in desperate need of healing, from the the rape of our planet, to the misuse of all modes of creation, whether animal or human within laboratories, regardless of the so-called benefits (Merchant, 1980, p.3). In his work The Crisis in Psychoanalysis, Fromm (1978) argues “the idea of the brotherhood of man is rooted in the principle of Motherhood, [however it] vanishes under patriarchy” (p.101).

In the case of war, women who have wanted to become warriors, Hamilton (2011) proposes that first they first have to become men: “women have to dress and act as men” (p.1). The question then to consider, do women have any innate inhibition against fighting, and the shedding of blood? Rose (1998) suggests “feminism has too often made violence and hatred the curse of male subjectivity alone...that much of the rhetoric needs to be revised (p.104). The case in point is the association between Margaret Thatcher and her relationship to Ruth Ellis, Elliott (1998) notes “the link between these two women is well known” in the United Kingdom (p.104). In 1955 Ellis was the last woman to be hanged in England, and in 1983 Thatcher wanting to reintroduce the death penalty within the precepts of the United Kingdom, brought the hanging of Ellis back into public attention in order to realise her objective (p.104). Rose (1998) notes that “this link between Hatcher and Ellis highlights the fact that violence can be used by females in dramatic fashion” (p.104). With this in mind, maleness and femaleness or anima and animus, are unconscious archetypal forces contained within the self carrying the qualities of its opposite (Jung, 1975, pp.27-30). This reality of female violence, Neumann (1955) contends is indicative of the negative side of the Feminine whereby the Great Mother becomes the “Terrible devouring destroying mother drawing life back into herself – here the womb becomes a devouring maw...that destroys all living things without distinction” (pp.71-72). In an archetypal sense, instead of women acting as a conciliatory influence upon men, they assume the role of the “terrible mother” in order
to achieve equality either through the political arena or military-machine. It is debatable whether or not there has been significant thought concerning young women returning from war in body bags, the patriarchal academy shows no pity but hides its guilty revulsion at seeing their faces blown off (Hamilton, 2011, p.4). Many men returning from combat suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, this disconnection, depersonalisation, and constant annihilation of human foe eventually takes its toll. At a deeper level notes Noddings (2012), evolutionary biology shows that women have something called maternal instinct, (p.113) and as such, what effect would the destruction of human life have on women as caregivers? One side of the issue is the failure of any form of empathy or moral compass inasmuch as war survives on a paradigm promoting separation, fear and annihilation. Hamilton (2011) notes “we are terrified of being accused of sexism as opposed to guilty revulsion – lines are being blurred between peace and war” (p.4). Noddinings cites Virginia Wolfe as an exemplum for defining women’s equality in a male orientated world. Women must be educated in male dominated institutions, study masculine-biased history, and she warns in particular about women joining the military:

*If we too become men, then there is no hope for human kind. Rather than joining the army we should help men refuse military service, refuse to kill. It is too easy to copy men’s ways and label it ‘equality’. There has always been a tendency for the oppressed to imitate the oppressor. Women have to counteract such a tendency. We have to discard as utterly dangerous to the human race all those values developed by men that are based on violence and oppression (pp.118-119).*

The process of achieving equality Noddings suggests, “may very well demand the rejection or destruction of the values we seek to elevate” (2012, p.118). O’Murchu (2013) suggests, there is no justification for our “addiction to warfare”, as it is an inheritance from the past, creating a “huge moral challenge for the twenty-first century. It will take something of a miracle, [and] probably a catastrophe, to bring about a deep change of heart” (p.154). We are not the ultimate species contends O’Murchu, “we belong to something bigger and greater than ourselves, which is forever unfolding and evolving, and within that dynamic, creative process we discover again and again, the meaning and purpose of what life is about” (p.78).
A World Under Pressure

Research from DeMeo’s, Saharasia, and Gimbutas, as cited in Eisler’s *Chalice and the Blade*, are in agreement as to the premise that the world dramatically changed around 4000BCE with the influx of peoples seeking new lands (DeMeo, 2006, pp.3, 8, 76, 389, DeMeo, 2013; Gimbutas as cited in Eisler, 1988, p. 44, Gimbutas, 1989, 1991; Elster, 2007, 2015; Christ, 2017a). According to Gimbutas the “Kurgan” migration into Europe occurred around 4300-4200 BCE, with the second wave approximately 3400-3200 BCE, the final and most devastating onslaught 3000-2800 BCE (Eisler, 1988, p.44, Elster, 2007, 2015, p.5; Christ, 2017a). Gimbutas suggest there is “absolutely no indication that Old European society was patrilinear or patriarchal, evidence from the cemeteries are not indicative of the subordinate position of women” (Gimbutas, 1989, p.64). The Kurgens notes Gimbutas, were a violent, heroic, warrior society, their main worship being the Sky God of Thunder, and Lightning, who has a preoccupation with death, rather than the life-giving forces of the Goddess (p.90). Ruether (2005), however, casts doubt on the archaeological work of Gimbutas and her definitive belief of a “monotheistic goddess” and existence of a matriarchal society (pp.20-28), suggesting that her evidence may be biased, although Ruether does acknowledge the fact that Gimbutas “tried to look at the ‘big picture’ that many feminist archaeologists have failed to do” (p.38). However, Christ (2017a) upholds Gimbutas’ theories by identifying Colin Renfrew, an avid antagonist towards Gimbutas, confirmed her Kurgan hypothesis through DNA investigation, citing there had been little research in the testing of DNA on ancient bones (Christ, 2017a, p.3).

Nonetheless, research from DeMeo concurs with that of Gimbutas attributing the same time-line for the influx of peoples, adding the period prior to this time was peaceful (DeMeo, 2006, pp.3, 8, 76, 389, DeMeo, 2013). What is strikingly different between Gimbutas and DeMeo’s assessment of this period is the fact that DeMeo attributes the Kurgan influx to climate change, when the earth’s environment changed from being green and lush to dry arid conditions, bringing famine and starvation (DeMeo, 2006, pp.3, 8, 76, 389, DeMeo, 2013). As a consequence of climate change, DeMeo, (2006) demonstrates how cultural alterations occurred from a ‘matrist’ or peaceful society, as argued to a ‘patrist’, or dominating patriarchal society (p.4). At the same time suggests DeMeo, massive cultural upheavals occurred in the Arabian and central Asian portions
of Saharasia, the Old World desert belt stretching across North Africa, the Near East, and into central Asia due to climate change (p.7). The desert landscape changed emotional and social attitudes, drought brought famine, children suffered from lack of protein and calorie deficiencies bringing about “high mortality and morbidity, emotional and physical deprivation” (p.6). DeMeo’s research has found a link by way of which “famine and starvation exact a similar emotional response to those stemming from maternal rejection, or isolation rearing, play[ing] out in later adult behavior” (p.6). Harsh environmental changes led to complex sequences of events: famine led to social chaos, many people died, family ties were shattered; emotional, social, and cultural bonds were destroyed; “land abandonment led to mass migration eventually growing into a fundamental shift in the mainstream of human cultural development” (p.7).

An important aspect of DeMeo’s findings is deduced in the work of psychologist William Reich (Reich as cited in De Meo, 2006) and his discovery of human armouring (p.25). Reich discovered how the link between environment, biology and social violence affects the experiences of childhood, and later changes the attitude and behaviour in adulthood (p.25) producing a “psychological armor” which causes a numbing or deadening of the “soft” emotions contributing to a lack of empathy and love (DeMeo, 2006, p.390). In such a context DeMeo contends, “warfare is a secondary effect of draught and famine, starvation compounds the damage to family life and social structure, promoting even more disturbing maternal-infant and male female relations” (p.7). DeMeo’s analysis is a timely reminder of today’s global situation as The United Nations (2018), has released its “first-ever Annual Report, laying out the 2017 achievements and pointing to the future of the climate change process” (p.1). A significant response to this underlying problem is born out in the ABC’s television program, 4 Corners, whereby the release of the documentary The Age of Consequences, demonstrates how: “…former US military leaders speak out about how climate change has led to drought, water and food shortages, driving dramatic population shifts which in turn destabilize governments in conflict prone areas. They call it a ‘threat multiplier’”(Scott, 2017, p.2).

In the voice of Gen. Gordon Sullivan (Retired, Former Chief of Staff, US Army), “We are not your traditional environmentalists”. Climate change is not only real, it is a real threat to global security (Scott, 2017, p.1). It would appear reasonable to conclude then,
the 4 Corners documentary supports the research of DeMeo as it “analyses the conflict in Syria, the social unrest in the Arab Spring, and the rise of groups like ISIS and how these experts believe climate change is already a catalyst for conflict” (p.1). We are now living in such an interconnected world that we are all implicated in one another’s history and one another’s tragedies (Armstrong, 2014).

Cultural Changes

A central concern of this chapter has been to demonstrate the links between history, and mythology when analysed together, provide ample evidence for religious, social and cultural changes within civilisation. If we consider primitive humanity regarded the source of all creation as Female, and over time became one of partnership, cultural evolution then arises from the perspective of two underlying possibilities for structuring social systems: the “domination model” and the “partnership model” (Eisler, 2000; 1988; 1995). Eisler coined the term dominator model as being either:

“patriarchy or matriarchy – the ranking of one half of humanity over the other. The second, in which social relations are primarily based on the principle of linking rather than ranking, may be described as the partnership model. In this model – beginning with the most fundamental model of our species, between male and female – diversity is not equated with either inferiority or superiority” (Eisler, 1988, p.xvii).

In Eisler’s words “we can read the cultural evolution of Western societies from Pre-History to the present in terms of underlying tension between these two basic alternatives for cultural organisation” (Eisler, 2000, p.263). The end process began when the individual male, long considered sterile, and fit only for hunting and war, realised he was part of procreation (Markale, 1999, p.4). There is a dark side to this however, as Markale (1999) writes in his book The Great Goddess, of how “freed of his ancient frustrations [he] took his revenge solemnly claiming his power and his essential role” (p. 4). Jean Markale, academic and lecturer at the Sorbonne in Paris, could be described as a vanity publisher, however, research from his book The Great Goddess, can be supported by other scholars of religion and mythology. Markale describes how the god Apollo, murders the serpent named Python, in the area of Delphi which “has served as the marker for the world’s centre, a symbolic centre...sacred in character...the
battle tak[ing] place at this site is...a sacred battle bringing the equilibrium of the world into play” (p.3). The name Python, comes from the Greek word which stems from the Greek root that means “deep cavity”, and then by extension, “origin”, having given us the Latin word puteus, “pit” or “well” (p.3). The “primal matrix” and the serpent are linked, without “resort[ing] to a psychoanalytic explanation, to the idea of parturition or regeneration” (p.3).

Scholars have provided evidence in support of the fact from prehistoric times, the Great Goddess of Beginnings alongside of her avatars, and epithets are all multiple aspects of one single entity (Baring & Cashford 1991: Markale, 1999; Campbell & Rossi, 2000). However, the legend of Apollo at Delphi expresses, along with similar myths, a turning point within humanity. Likewise, the Epic of Gilgamesh recounts the story of the hero Gilgamesh who searches for immortality; the god Marduk, central figure to the Enuma Elish, utilises the body of the Goddess Tiamat in the creation of the world. All feminine images are obliterated, women once central and sacred to belief, are excluded from the new masculine centred religions (Markale, 1999, p.25). The Old Testament recounts the story of Joshua promising the new god Yahweh he will no longer worship any other gods (Sproul, 1991, p.4): “Now, therefore, put away the strange gods that are among you and turn your hearts to the Lord, our God and obey his voice. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statues and ordinances for them at Shecham which he recorded in the book of the law of God” (Joshua 24:23-26). The entire Book of Joshua centers on Joshua’s bloody conquest of his enemies to gain the Promised Land. Christ notes, the Orestia written by Aeschylus centers on three plays which cover the burgeoning Athenian democracy. Central to the second play is the theme of matricide: Orestes brutally murders his mother Clytemnestria (Christ, 2020, p.2). In the third play Orestes is pursued by three old women known as the Furies whose duty is to avenge the matricide. The Furies represent the old order of the Mother-line while Orestes, Apollo and Athena uphold the values if the Father-line. Even though Athena was once the symbol of the Mother-line and maternal values, the goddess no longer believes in the honour due to the mother. Orestes is vindicated. Maternal values are discredited, violence against women is legitimised. The message conveyed in the plays is the breaking of the maternal bonds between mother and child (Christ, 2020, pp1-5).
The conflict between masculine and feminine conceptions of divinity is not new, however these stories mark a radical change in consciousness: the transition from Mother Goddess to Father God with the Feminine and her sacred symbols judged as inferior, salvation is only obtainable through the masculine principle. Nature and the feminine are now regarded as ‘other’, mythology shows how Nature now gives birth to monsters.

The Rupture Between Man and Nature

Merchant argues, Western civilisation has developed on the foundation of a fundamental dissociation between spirit and nature, creator and creation (Merchant, 1980, p.2). As Thomas (2009) comments:

*the making of civilisation is always an act against nature. The problem began when man forgot the mysteries – the sacred workings of the innermost and outermost realms, because of his attention to trade. When man can buy and sell what emanates from the earth and no longer perceives the earth as a mystery, he becomes concerned with his own ritual of alchemical transformation: he can turn grain into gold* (p.21).

Baring notes in *The Separation of Nature and the Feminine Aspect of Spirit*, for almost three thousand years in Judaeo-Christian civilisation, the image of God, as the creator of the Universe has no Feminine dimension of the Divine (Baring, 2014, p.1). If we take into account the image of the Great Mother, as soul, as embraced in earlier civilisations, most importantly, “the feeling that spirit was imminent or present within the phenomenal world [is] lost, thus opening the way to its ultimate exploitation” (2014, p.1). In her lecture *Awakening to the Feminine*, Baring writes “the Feminine, once associated with the image of the Great Mother and Great Goddess of earlier cultures, with the deeply experienced sense that the world was part of a Sacred Cosmic Order, [is now] relegated to the unconscious” (Baring, 2015, p.1). When humanity unbound itself from the soil, it bound itself to a predominantly technological environment which in turn provoked a profound spiritual crisis (Merchant, 1980, p.2). Humanity lost its way of life within the natural landscape, and this dissociation effectively destroyed the traditional understanding of the presence of spirit, in the phenomenal world, and opened the way to its ultimate exploitation (Baring, 2015, p.1). The scientific revolution added
further to the depersonalisation of Nature by proceeding to rationalise, mechanise, and technologise the natural environment (Merchant, 1980, p.2). Cultural values have shifted over the centuries due to the loss of the Feminine. Conventional religious teachings added to the gender bias by splitting Nature from spirit while contaminating the instincts with guilt and fear, thus relinquishing an essential part of our wholeness (Ruether, 1983; Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). The rape of Nature, alongside of women, are one and the same within the human psyche (Merchant, 1980, p.3). Merchant argues women and Nature have been linked throughout the ages: this affiliation has permeated throughout history, language and culture (p.4). Aristotle and his male contemporaries held the view that women and Nature are inferior, a notion that is adopted by Judaism and Christianity, and upheld by patriarchal societies throughout the centuries (p.3). During the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, Church Fathers, followed later by the Protestant clergy, cited numerous Classical and Biblical viewpoints on the inferiority, and corruptibility of the female sex (Merchant, 1980, pp.5-6; Noddings, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). Christ shares her concerns with other spiritual feminists, ecofeminists, ecologists, antinuclear activists and others stating “there is a crisis that threatens the destruction of the earth” (Christ, 1992, p.314). According to Kaufman, as cited in Christ (1992), dominant theological traditions consider Nature to be without purpose or value, “Nature appears to be non-teleological, non-axiological order within which emerges purpose valuing activity” (Christ, 1992, p.315). Continuing this line of reasoning, Kaufman analyses the conception of god with humanity as they have developed in Western traditions as “work[ing] hand in hand towards distinguishing humankind from (the rest) of Nature. Nature...is not conceived primarily as our proper home and the varying sources and sustenance of our being...[within]...Western theology [is] the concept of a personal, moral will separating both humanity and God from Nature” (p.315).

We have forgotten that humanity is also part of Nature. In this sense the Western mindset imagines everything as separate, rational thought is a working hypothesis for the metaphysics of seeing the world by making everything within it conform to that model. In her Philosophy lectures, Anne Baring (n.d.) points out how Swiss psychiatrist, C.G. Jung describes in his many books how “it is crucially important now for us to balance the masculine ethos of our culture with its emphasis on power, control and
conquest by integrating the less valued aspects of the feminine archetype: nature and matter, soul and body, feeling and instinct” (p.4). It has been found that there is a spiritual void as a consequence of the loss of the Divine Feminine as Matthews asserts “an attack on the feminine is an assault on Nature herself” (Matthews, 1992, p.265). Matthews points out within the “Hermetic dictum, ‘Nature takes delight in Nature, Nature contains Nature, and Nature can overcome Nature,’ was drastically reinterpreted by Cartesian science. Francis Bacon spoke of Nature as ‘a common harlot,’ as a fertile female slave, a subservient creature which could be exploited by mankind” (1992, p.265).

So Nature, as the giver and foundation of all life is technologised by masculine dominated ethics, transforming her into a mechanism of exploitation (Laura & Cotton, 1999, p.148). Carolyn Merchant (1980) describes Nature as a living organism, since the premise of her book illustrates the “Death of Nature”. Death comes about when patriarchy ceases to view the cosmos as organic, or as a nurturing mother, but rather as a machine to be probed and exploited (p.3). The same process can be applied to our theory of knowledge and human relationships where power is used to dominate separate and control transforming humanity and nature into inert, lifeless objects with increasing predictability (Laura & Cotton, 1999, p.148). New science brought the discovery of quantum physics “crystallising perceptions of a new structure in nature which is fundamentally different from the machine-like ontic representation of classical physics” (p.148). James Lovelock (as cited in O’Murchu, 2013), in conjunction with Lynn Margulis, developed the Gia hypothesis (O’Murchu, 2013, p.106). Lovelock (as cited in O’Murchu, 2013) described, “Planet Earth [a]s not merely the product of past geological processes, but also an ongoing process of co-creation” (p.106).

Conceptually, this can be observed in the metaphysics of the ‘Great Mother’ as she establishes her cyclic system of perpetual becoming, every temporary living form in the universe blends eventually into every other form, nothing is unrelated (O’Murchu, 2013, p.36; Matthews, 1992, p.326), hereof “there can be no hierarchy of better or worse - We and They” (Walker, 1985, p.14). In a world striving to be non-sexist, some feel uneasy about this description, while most dismiss the Mother metaphor as a “lot of sentimental drivel” (O’Murchu, 2013, p.105). In saying this, O’Murchu espouses there is a profound wisdom in the notion of the earth as Mother, rather than being an object
for exploitation, the earth “nurtures and sustains all her creatures and seeks a subject-to-subject relationship with all living things” (p.105). The alienation of Nature and the distrust of the Feminine, attributed to masculine centered gendered epistemology, regretfully has become part of our history. In this sense Matthews (1992), notes there is a spiritual void in our world which can be attributed to man’s constant fear of the Feminine (p.265) and as a consequence there is no Feminine face of the Divine. We imagine ourselves as separate while in truth there is only One Being, the totality of God is both male and female: I am you and you are me (p.265). Ergo, by honouring the divine within each other an end to the I occurs resulting in a shift in consciousness (p.265).

**Feminist Theological Epistemology**

In his work *Quantum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics*, Diarmuid O’Murchu (2013) suggests the 1980s saw a trend in feminist theology which sought to obtain a greater voice for women within the church, and decision making, namely “the rediscovery of the Feminine within both women and men...challenging patriarchy, androcentrism, and sexism” (p.17). Feminist theology relies on experience (Christ & Plaskow, 1992, p.5, 2016; O’Murchu, 2013, p.17), and women’s unique capacity to trust their feelings and emotions (O’Murchu, 2013, p.17). Feminist theology seeks to overcome dualism, seeing the world as an organic whole, not distorted by masculine fragmentation (p.17). Life is essentially one where opposites are better understood in complementary values. This outlook states O’Murchu, “has profound ramifications not merely for theology, but for all branches of contemporary wisdom and learning (p.18). From a theological standpoint, feminist hermeneutics enables women to engage in the critical construction of religious meaning in ways that talk to women’s experiences especially in the dehumanisation due to patriarchy (Fiorenza, 1985; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). Feminist exegesis treats Biblical studies with a “heumanuetic of suspicion”, women are set apart by men due to “creational difference” (Fiorenza, 1985, p.7). Feminist Biblical interpretation must challenge scriptural authority of patriarchal text and explore how the Bible is used as a weapon against women (Christ & Plaskow,
Fiorenza recommends a multidimensional model of Biblical interpretation...such a model must be a feminist-critical and historical-concrete model. It must not only show how individual Biblical texts and writings functioned in their historical-political settings but also pay additional attention to the intersection and interplay of Biblical text with contemporary politics and socialisation (p.7).

Careful analyses of the texts are therefore paramount in the struggle for women’s survival, Fiorenza recommends, a warning label should be placed on all Biblical texts: “Caution! Could be dangerous to your health and survival” (p.8). Ruether (1992) writes in *Mother Earth and the Megamachine*, of how Christianity inherited Platonic dualism, but “alienation of the Masculine from the Feminine is the primary sexual symbolism that sums up these alienations” (p.44). According to Ruether, a great deal of theology “has been written and interpreted by males rather than universal experience...mind/body, spirit/nature, and male/female dualism that have deeply shaped Western religious thinking” (Ruether, 1983, p.2). Christ and Plaskow (1992) add their voice:

> Where in the history of religion have women’s voices and experiences contributed to the moulding of tradition? What would it mean for women’s experience to shape theology and religion of the future? The word experience becomes a key term, a significant norm for feminists reconstructing tradition and creating new religious forms (p.6)

Carol Christ (1989) asks “should we follow the voice of male philosophy and theology that disconnects from our emotions and relationship with Nature or should we listen...to the voice of many other feminists that reverse dualistic thinking that we are all part of the divine within all of Nature” (p.316). Plato, notes Christ, “equates the physical world and the body with darkness that can only be lit by “the transcendent light of reason” (p.315). Ruether (1989) adds, “the psychic traits of intellect, transcendent spirit, and autonomous will identified with the male, has left women with contrary traits of the body, sensuality, and subjugation” (p.44). Through the centuries adds Ruether, society has in every way profoundly conditioned men and women to play out their lives and
find their capacities within this bases antithesis (p.44). Despite the creational covenant’s insistence on the model of co-humanity, male superiority and women’s subordination is an ordained necessity of creation (p.50).

In the same manner, Young and Nathanson (2010) advance a derogative argument, contradicting the views of second wave feminists, concerning the history and worship of Great Goddess. In their work *Sanctifying Misandry*, the authors examine what they consider to be four basic arguments that characterise the goddess. She was:

\[a\] the **primal** object of worship (that of our remotest ancestors).
\[b\] the **supreme** object without any serious rivals, especially from gods.
\[c\] the **universal** object of worship (as a single essence that takes on slightly various forms according to time and place).
\[d\] the **primordial** object of worship (which continues today, whether overtly or covertly, as it was in the remote past (p.27)).

The authors have failed to take into consideration the evidence provided by mythology, archaeology and the history of religion. Evidence for the reverence of a Great Goddess, Goddess of Beginning, Great Mother or Mother Goddess (titles she was known by) and her creation of the universe and also mankind, is prolific within both modern and ancient text, (Baring & Cashford, 1991, Markale, 1975, 1999, Campbell, 2013, Fee & Leeming, 2016, *The Mabinogion, The Tain, Lebor Gabála Érenn, The Enuma Elish, The Epic of Gilgamesh*). Holland (2005), Hale (2009), and Voth (2010), add voice to the vast array of authors who substantiate the evidence for a Great Goddess: from the Palaeolithic period through to the Neolithic, stating that she was the **primal object of worship** until men discovered paternity and the myths subsequently changed. As already argued the *Orestia* of Aescylus is a prime example for the devaluation of the Feminine Principle at the dictates of patriarchy. Baring (2015) notes for some 20,000 years the Great Mother “is an image of overwhelming numinosity...she is the source of all life: one life manifesting as the life of each and all...Everything has meaning through relationship with the Great Mother so relationship or connection came to be understood as an essential quality of the Feminine” (p.2).

Female figurines or statuettes have been found in the Mediterranean, Near East, all across Europe, as far north as Siberia (Markale, 1999, p.4, Holland, 2005, Stuckey,
2005) and across to the sea to the Orkney Islands (Scarre, 2017, p.3). Various views and opinions have been put forward to explain the function of these Venus figurines named after the Goddess Venus (Goodison & Morris, 1998, p.14). Von Pitzinger notes that paleo-anthropologists refer to the Venus figurines with “air quotes” as the name is not terribly accurate (Von Petzinger, 2016, p.95). The discovery of the first human figurines was in the 1800’s, it was named Venus because it “reminded him of a sculpture by Michael Angelo” (p.95). By labelling all figurines with this tittle has led to confusion (p.95). In Baring and Cashford’s (1991) account, the Bronze Age heralds the arrival of the son/lover, god/king, (pp.145-175) given that the identity of the Great Mother survived down the ages through her archetypal avatars, although their powers were greatly watered down by the overthrow of the new patriarchal regime. As already noted, this topic will be discussed in the following chapter. Research from Eisler (1988, 1995), Christ (1997), Starhawk (1999), Coleman (2001) and Ruether (2005), has shown that there are women today who follow Goddess spirituality as an alternate philosophical system with its more female-valuing symbolic structures. Goddess spirituality adherents have long realised the power of symbol and recognised that this tradition was creating a new symbolic order. Coleman’s hypothesis identifies the “semiotic ingredients and process of that transformation as conveying an understanding of why and how Goddess spirituality and its rituals are empowering within a much grander scheme than suggested by relative deprivation theory” (Coleman, 2005, p.231). She continues by stating that “Western culture is highly influenced, if not wholly determined, by a limited symbolic system” (p.231). The idea of replacing “He” with “She” threatens the very core of the current system of signification and everything in it (p.237). That said, in Sanctifying Misandry, Young and Nathanson (2010), malign Goddess “ideologues”, arguing that they carry a distinctly “metaphysical dimension” with the primary feature of everyday life being “patriarchal”, taken in this context “refers to more than an oppressive social or political system: it refers ultimately to an ontological cosmic state” (p.61). Irigary (1993), An Ethics of Sexual Difference, argues that within Western culture God functions as the keystone of language, sign, and symbolic systems (pp.5-19). The interrelations of gender, God, and language, confers Irigary, “have not only had a long history but also a well protected one...they have for centuries been scrupulously protected by the word of men” (Coleman, 2005, p.233). According to Lacan (as cited in Coleman), the symbol of significance within Western culture is “phallocentric”, basing
his argument on binary gender hierarchy “with the superior position of the male or, more specifically, the designation of the Phallus as the privileged signifier” (Coleman, 2005, p.231). Lacan not only describes our culture as “phallocentric”, but also our language (Coleman, 2005, p.231, Shlain, 1999).

Goddess spirituality is not a religion of the book, as is the Bible, and other religious apocrypha, a fact which remains challenging for some since its symbols are drawn from Wicca and pagan traditions (Starhawk, 1999, p.17). The Wiccan/Goddess religion is not a mere affront to patriarchy states Coleman (2001), but arguably, and theoretically, “can be viewed as de-stabilising or even rupturing Western metaphysics through radical transformation of the hegemonic signifying system” (p.236). This profound potential is, in Coleman’s view, “the impetus behind the voracious attacks both on scholarship and practices that seriously consider a historical or contemporary conception of the divine as female” (p.236). Today some philosophers and theologians view the Goddess tradition as a mere inversion of the binary positioning of the current “phallocentric” symbolic hierarchy and this remains problematic because replacing man on top with woman on top, or replacing God with Goddess preserves the same symbolic system (p.236). For instance, in her ground breaking article Why Women Need a Goddess, Carol Christ (1992) describes “symbols as having both, psychological and political effects, because they create the inner conditions...that lead people to feel comfortable with or to accept social and political arrangements that correspond to the symbol system” (p.74). Noddings points out how it is important that students are made aware of of the conflicting creation stories found in Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2; in the first creation story male and female are created equal but in the second story creation of man and woman is inverted: woman comes from man (Noddings, 1993, p.10). Public Theology is a means to address theological controversies (Lovat, 2019) such as feminist critiques of religiously orientated sexism and “creational difference” (Fiorenza, 1985).

Women have had a long history of subjugation, and the source of this can be found, at least partly, within the Judaean-Christian scriptures (Inglis, 1880, pp.494-495; Trible, 1973a, 1973b; Lerner, 1986a; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Johnson, 1994; Ruether, 1994; Ruether, 2005; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). It has been asserted that male-dominated, systematised ethics hold the controlling power over women if not the entire planet (Ruether, 1994, p.3). This gender elitism has covertly legitimised discriminatory,
hierarchical presumptions, which Laura, Buchanan and Chalender call “patriarchal theism” (Laura & Buchanan, 2012, p.170, Laura & Chalender, 2012, p.175). The term patriarchal theism, they assert, “refers to the conceptualisation of a God who reflects a patriarchal understanding and ordering of the world” (Laura & Buchanan, 2012, p.170). There is need for a reconceptualised theory of knowledge from a patriarchal disposition, to one that develops into to a deeper concern for the Feminine Principle: a framework that comes out of, and is supported by a premise of ‘wholeness’. This notion of wholeness should entail caring, empathy and love, from a feminine perspective, in contrast to the negative, patriarchal, value-laden ideology, of phallocentric ethics and separatist feminism.

Two books published in the 1970s were important in the accepted feminist literature on Goddess worship: Elizabeth Gould Davis’s First Sex (1971) and Merlin Stone’s When God was a Woman (1976). Davis (1971) imitates the same dominator paradigm as she assumes an epistemology which dehumanises the opposite sex, her comments on men are disparaging, their personhood has no “intrinsic value”; they are “mutant freaks”, with “chromosome abnormalities”, “glorified gonads” and remain the “frightened victims of women” (pp.55-6). In some strands of feminism women influenced by the unconscious bias of patriarchal hegemony try to imitate men. In this sense, their theories became dualistic, binary, andandrocentric ideology, while dehumanizing men and women for not being good enough. O’Murchu (2013) notes, “androcentrism is a one-sided approach to all relationships, whether human or earthly, whereby the male is projected as the stronger, the better, the more authentic” (p.17). From this perspective in The Creation of Patriarchy, Lerner (1986a) notes “women are complicit with men in upholding the system that subordinated them” (p.6). Lerner suggests “the difference is due to culture, patriarchy as a system is historical” (p.6). Western culture is hooked on Romantic love, Eric Fromm (1978) The Art of Loving describes “love is an art to be learnt just like any other skill” it is man’s sense of separate self that isolates him from Nature, or in Fromm’s words “the primal Mother”, which is the source of original love (p.9). The problem is “both sexes are starved for love” (p.9). Both sexes look for ways to make each other lovable, women seek to make themselves attractive, in contrast, men become high-achievers (p.9). Mature love preserves the integrity of the individual, as Fromm identifies “love as an actual power in man” which breaks down all barriers, uniting all opposites thus overcoming “isolation and separateness yet permits him to be
himself and retain integrity” (p.24). Viewed this way “the paradox occurs when two beings become one yet remain two” (p.24).

A new paradigm of knowledge is required, one which reflects the Feminine in our interaction with the world around us. An element of this principle can be found in the arguments of Nel Noddings, and Joan Tronto, on the subject of their Ethic of Care. Tronto espouses the practice of an ethic of care is complex requiring specific moral qualities, while posing a different range of moral dilemmas than the current mode of thinking (Tronto, 2005, p.252). Four elements are provided by Tronto as an essential process, which must fit together as a whole in the ethic of care (pp.252-256). Care as a practice involves more than good intentions: it requires deep thoughtful knowledge of the situation; knowledge of the context of the core process; judgments, strategies, assessment of needs in social, political, as well as personal context (pp.255-256). These issues are also observed by Noddings (2012), as care ethics “does not depend on religion as a source, nor does it accept rationality as its sole basis of morality” it is anchored in natural caring (p.97). Noddings work, Peace Education: How We Come to Love & Hate War explores ways to extend caring beyond family and local community (p.97). As will be discussed next the erosion of the feminine principle has generate this need for a new paradigm for religious education.

Creation Mythology and the Erosion of the Feminine Principle

You may ask what has ancient mythology to do with Religious Education, let me explain. Creation myths are usually linked to the concept of deity, as the force which creates life is the core of all religious beliefs (Sproul, 1991, p.3). According to ancient sources (Neumann, 1955), the Universe developed out of roundness, beginning with the circle and the cosmic egg; the bubble and the spiral, as well as the moon and the wheel of time, each developed out of the representations of wholeness. The symbolic manifestation of human life is circular: birth is exemplified by a round pregnant belly and full breasts, life and death are perceived as part of a never ending cycle (p.19).
Conceptually, the Feminine Principle (as the essence of all life), has been eroded through the years by male dominated epistemology, consequently the mythologies of the world’s three dominant religious systems contain no Feminine face of the Divine, for example: Exodus, 20:1-5, Deuteronomy, 5:6-10, Isaiah, 44:6. *I am the first and the last; there is no other god but me* (Isaiah, 44:6).

There is a need for a reconceptualised framework from that of patriarchy to a deeper concern of the feminine within a new role and context. Traditional conceptions of female inequality have been grounded in the foundational mythology of Western Judeo-Christian thought starting with the Biblical exegesis of Genesis (Trible, 1973a, 1973b) which advances a psychological platform for the beginning of patriarchy developing into an epistemology of power and control, the likes of which still remain inherent in the Western world today (Laura & Chalender, 2012, p.175). A philosophical issue is at stake since there are gaps in the current myths which subjugate rather than empower the feminine. The spirit of the positive side of feminism cannot be so easily diminished, as it has in part, been misrepresented in the vain hope that society can know that the complaints of feminism have been dissipated, ‘get back to work as usual’. Works put forth by feminists provide like-minds with the conceptual framework to add voice to the disparities that are consuming our planet. Though expressed in different languages, and through images drawn through different traditions, the conception of God calls us to rethink the traditional dualisms through which we have come to understand in relation to the divine, humanity and Nature. This being so, the dominant paradigm has set out all the laws for women. In *Primal Myths: Creation Myths Around the World*, Sproul (1991) argues these considerations by writing of how “our belief that ‘all men are equal,’ for example, is still firm, even though we have come to include men and all women in an originally more restrictive claim” (p.4). Conflicting views of the proper attitude towards women, for example, can be seen side by side not only in any newspaper but also in the first book of the Old Testament (p.4). Sproul notes “the myth of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:4-23, c.900B.C.), speaks of the first woman as dependant on (and derivative of) the first man”, while the myth of creation in six days (Genesis 1:2-3, c.400B.C.) describes the genders as of equal origin (p.4). Holding literally to the claims of any particular myth as scientific fact results in the worst form of religiosity, such literalism requires a faith that splits rather than unifies our consciousness (Sproul, 1991, p.4). Myths must also be capable of creating new meaning, by offering a sense of renewal,
rather than relying on the old myths and their meaning which is failing to validate life. O’Connor (2000) in *Beyond the Mist*, argues an outstanding feature of both feminist theology and New Age philosophy has been the honouring of the Goddess, in opposition to monotheism (p.6). This in part, suggests O’Connor is “represent[ative of] a reaction against the long-standing domination of patriarchal values. But in this adoration, only one side of the goddess figure is considered, and that is, the nurturing, life-sustaining aspect, not the destructive, life-devouring aspect” (pp.6-7).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to lay the foundation material for my thesis. In essence the work so far has investigated the philosophical presumptions surrounding the Feminine Principle through the guise of the Great Mother, the rise of patriarchy and the advent of patriarchal theism. Public Theology is a means for providing a curriculum by way of which students gain an integral knowledge of feminist hermeneutics, and feminist theology along side of the religions that make up his/her society. It could be argued that the program which deliberately ignores such knowledge creates “potential menaces to our future society” (Lovat, 1989, 2019). The background or filter of the thesis is a critical exploration examining the content of mythology, and its relationship with respect to historical, archaeological and scientific evidence. Conclusive arguments have been set forth to determine current research as either being biased, or conclusive in the assessment of the Feminine. This being the case, religions where the Great Mother was invested with real power did exist from prehistoric times as the evidence above has shown. The following chapter will examine alternative creation mythologies in light of the Genesis creation account and the further deterioration of the ‘Feminine Principle’.
Chapter 2: In the Beginning

Introduction:

The argument set forth in the previous chapter was to demonstrate how myths form the basis for religious beliefs, forming cultural attitudes that underpin the framework of societies. It has been found, states Lerner (1986a), “who creates life lies at the bottom of all religious belief systems” (p.193). At the dawn of mankind, worship of the ‘Feminine’, as ‘Principle’, was an intrinsic part of both social and religious life. From the Paleolithic Era, archeological evidence argues for the presence of a female deity who was worshiped in all ancient agricultural societies. The worship of the Great Mother, or Goddess of Beginnings was wide-spread throughout the ancient world as a universal religion, based on the renewal of life. The earth was perceived to be the Great-Mother of all creation: animals and plants; man and beast were all her children and subject to her laws.

Over time man realises he is also part of genesis, which gives rise to the young god, consort, and lover. The Mother-Goddess’s creative power is subsequently overshadowed and subjugated by the rise of the patriarchal all powerful Sky God who becomes king and master. What were once female-centered religions, are taken over and suppressed by patriarchal monotheism incorporation now develops into a higher form of consciousness. If we take into account that the prehistoric Paleolithic Era - roughly 2.6 million to 10,000 BCE and the Neolithic Era roughly 10,000 BCE - 4,500 BCE, the sole principle of universal fertility and worship was the Great Mother Goddess. With the Bronze Age around 4,500 BCE - 3500 BCE, we find the Goddess being assisted by male gods or kings. In the Iron Age 1200 BCE – 1,000 BCE, there is a shift to the Storm-God and his female consort, later being replaced by one single male god that incorporates procreation through the act of Naming. To the question “Who creates life”? Genesis answers, “Yahweh and the God-like male he created” (Lerner, 1986a, p.193).

Research for the current chapter traces the journey of the Feminine Principle throughout the Bronze Age, 4,500BCE (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.10, Holland, 2005, p.60, Lerner, 1986a, p.193) and finishes at the start of the Iron Age roughly 1200BCE.
depending upon the region (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.155, Holland, 2005, p.60). According to DeMeo’s (2006) independent review of archaeological and historical evidence, there is no comprehensive evidence of patriarchy “anywhere on Earth before approximately 5000BCE, and no significant, lasting traces until around 4000BCE...only peaceful matrist traits can be inferred from the deepest layers of archaeological material” (p.8). Was the decline of the Great Mother Goddess, who served as an image of humanity’s original wholeness natural epistemology, or evolved metaphysics? How did the creation stories of this particular epoch influence humanity on both spiritual and social levels as well as influencing the status of women during this particular period of human existence. A new paradigm of consciousness occurs, commencing with the myths of the Mother Goddess and her Son-Lover/Consort, emerging in the Bronze Age, coming to light in earliest poetry of Sumeria (Stone, 1976; Shlain, 1999; Markale, 1999; Baring & Cashford, 1991, Long, 1992). The marriage between the Goddess and her son/consort is one of reciprocity, the significance of their relationship is born out in the fact that it is based on equality, thus inaugurating “the living and dying aspect of the timeless whole” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.162). The earliest evidence for the inversion of the myths of the former era occurs in the Sumerian/Babylonian Epic of Creation or the Enuma Elish. Instead of the Goddess sacrificing her son-lover, the Goddess is herself sacrificed by her own creation: the young god, her great-great-great-grandson (Walcot, 1966; Stone, 1976; Lerner, 1986a; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Knapp, 1997). The Iron Age, beginning roughly around 1250BCE, brought about the demise of the Feminine Principle through the advancement of monotheism, “numinosity” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.273) is relocated from the Mother Goddess to the Father God, thus securing the foundations of patriarchal hierarchy and order. Creation now takes place through the spoken Word, not from the fertile womb of the Mother Goddess. At this point creation becomes linear and part of a divine plan.

In The Alphabet and the Goddess, Leonard Shlain (1999) proposes a neuro-anatomical hypothesis whereby the demise of the Goddess occurred around-about the time people learned to read and write, as this new skill changed the brain’s actual structure (p.viii) thereby bringing profound changes in gender relations (p.3). Shlain points out how “writing of any kind especially the alphabetic form, diminishes feminine values and with them, feminine values in culture” (p.1). Shlain proposes: “a holistic, simultaneous, synthetic and concrete view of the world are essential characteristics of a feminine
outlook: *linear, sequential reductionist, and abstract* thinking defines masculine…every individual is generously endowed with all the features of both” (p.1).

Shlain (1999) suggests that one pernicious effect of literacy, which has gone largely unnoticed, is the fact that writing subliminally fosters a patriarchal outlook (p.67) codifying laws and religious dogma. Anthropologist Claude Levi-Straus (as cited in Kirk, 1970) was one of the few scholars to challenge literacy’s worth, noting “literacy has promoted the subjugation of women by men throughout all but the very recent history of the West (p.1). Misogyny and patriarchy rise and fall with the fortunes of the alphabetic written word (p.3). The rise of patriarchal theology brought about re-myth making, starting in Egypt and Sumeria, into Babylon and Canaan, across into Greece, culminating in Palestine, here, the final redaction of the myths shaped one sacred book in the form of The Old Testament (Eisler, 1988, p.85, Shlain, 1999, p.5). Written scrolls demanded that the acolytes be literate; Shlain proffers until that time, “to know the deity one had only to see Her image or observe Her rituals. With the advent of the alphabet, to know the deity demanded that one must first read His written words” (Shlain, 1999, p.65). The alphabet marks the beginning of the Western world, “simply put, the invention of the alphabet reconfigured the world” (p.66).

**Myth and Human Development**

The Bronze Age roughly begins around 3500BCE and lasts until 1250BCE, its name is borrowed from the image of conquest, not culture (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.206; Lerner, 1986a). With the invention of bronze, new technologies came about, bringing with them social changes from tribal village to town, developing into state and later empire (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.206). New developments see people drawn together initiating the division of castes or groupings: priests, farmers, craftsman, and for the first time, warriors (p.206). Baring & Cashford (1991) note that during the course of the third millennium the atmosphere of the Bronze Age culture changes with the advent of the city-state ruled by a king. Mesopotamian states are modelled on the supernatural world and as such reflect directly upon the earthly hierarchy of power and state (Stuckey, 2001; Baring & Casford, 1991, p.206; Mann, 1999, p.181; Kirk, 1970, p.253) As Roux (as cited in Mann, 1999) points out “the divine society was conceived
as a replica of the human society and organised accordingly” (p.181). Towards the middle of the Bronze Age the Mother Goddess recedes into the background as father gods begin to take centre stage” (p.206). Erich Neumann (1970), in his Origins and History of Consciousness, discusses this movement as an inevitable development in the history of human consciousness, “the imagery of the Goddess begins to lose its capacity to inspire; gradually the male principle assumes an increasingly dynamic role” (p.206). If we look at the subtleties of societies and cultures they can be better understood and explained via the ambiguities, discrepancies, contradictions, and paradoxes of the great myths, all of which have been rarely treated, and taken seriously for their spiritual dimension (Noddings, 1994, p.36). New creation myths occur by subjugating the old, hereof positioning the Father God in a principal role. Kirk (1970) notes ancient Near-Eastern myths are the oldest known myths as they exemplify the affects in the transitioning from an oral to literate societies (p. 253). Extending this line of reasoning, Shlain (1999) notes the demise of the Goddess occurred around the time when people learned to read and write, his hypothesis differs profoundly, as he argues that literacy indeed “changed the brain’s actual structure” (p.viii). In this light, Shlain argues “the introduction of the written word, and the alphabet, into the social intercourse of humans initiated a fundamental change in the way newly literate cultures understood their reality” (p.7). It was this dramatic change in mind-set that Shlain proposes was primarily responsible for fostering patriarchy (p.7) and the decline in feminine values. Sumeria and Egypt afford the first record of the myth of the separation between Earth and Heaven that was to become the foundation of Iron Age theologies (Campbell & Ross, 2013; Stuckey, 2001; Cojocaru, 2011, Eliade, 1996; Baring & Cashford, 1991). Baring contends “the emphasis is no longer on creation emerging from a Mother Goddess, but on a god separating his parents and so initiating the ‘process’ of creation” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.152). In his book Myth: Its Meaning and It’s Function in Ancient and Other Cultures, Kirk (1970) points out that our interest in myth and the part they played in illiterate, primitive societies, whether being tribal or non urban cultures are seen as prime targets for anthropological interest (p.253). He continues by stating anthropologist Levi-Strauss (as cited in Kirk, 1970) brought a fresh approach to the study of ancient myth and religion, “freeing them from the tyranny of Christian inhibitions and preconceptions in matters affecting the investigation of religious feeling and opened up an immense range of new comparative material, some of which
undeniably gave the clue to longstanding puzzles in religion and sociology of ancient times” (p.253). Kirk (1970) contends that Near Eastern myths have been neglected, suggesting that they provide a good basis for structuralist and other forms of interpretation (p.253).

What are Creation Stories in Actual Fact About?

Coote and Ord (1991), describe how in the Near East temples of the ancient world become centers of learning, law and order within the city-state. (Kirk, p.5, 1970; Mann, 1999; Stuckey, 2001). Clay tablets are agents of information in regard to the Mesopotamian creation myth, coming from the temple, and home to the gods (Coote & Ord, 1991, p.5). In this respect, scribes and priests are closely related, drawn out of the elite ruling class, their position inherited through hereditary priestly families, who legitimize their function through the rites of the priesthood and state (pp.6-7). The temples are service centers to the gods, acting as a microcosm of the supernatural world and city state (p.6). Creation now finds its place in cult with the development of nature gods becoming city gods: stories now focus from the perspective of a particular cult with the writers of the Mesopotamian Enuma Elish or Epic of Creation, emerging from those same city cults (p.6). Analysis of the Enuma Elish will be determined as the chapter unfolds. Coote & Ord argue “the creation of the world is in fact the creation of a cult”, and in the case of Babylon, justifies Marduk’s primacy amongst the Babylonian gods (p.7). Baring and Cashford (1991) ask: “how did images of the ‘god’ arise”? (p.xii) From Babylonian mythology onwards (c.2000BCE), the goddess became exclusively associated with ‘Nature’ as the chaotic force to be mastered and the god took the role of conquering or ordering Nature from his counter-pole of ‘Spirit’ (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.xii).

In a similar vein, Lerner (1986a) suggests that patriarchy has placed women closer to nature than culture. Her argument illustrates the fact that Nature and women have been devalued, and exploited by the institutionalization of male dominance, power and control (Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001; Fiorenza, 1985). Lerner (1986a), contends that “the foundation of patriarchy happened over a period of nearly 2500 years, from approximately 3,100BCE to 600BCE, occurring in the Ancient
Near East at a different pace, and at different times within several distinct societies” (p.8). According to Lerner, patriarchy as a system is both a historical and a cultural concept: “If patriarchy were ‘natural’ that is, based on biological determinism, then to change it would mean to change nature. One would argue that changing nature is precisely what civilization has done, but that so far most of the benefits of the domination over nature which men call ‘progress’ has accrued to the male of the species” (p.6).

The law of patriarchy receives divine status becoming a universal presumption in the sense that man (as in masculine principle) has the power over creation, woman, and nature (Lerner, 1986a, p.197; Johnson, 1994; Devlin-Glass & McCraddock, 2001). Viewed in this light, Lerner (1986a) clarifies how God, the patriarchs along with the narratives of the Old Testament, assume as a given, the subordinate position of women, excluding them the metaphysical covenant, and earthly covenant community (p.178). Women’s only function is that of a mother, denied wisdom and access to God, patriarchy appropriates women’s wisdom as their own as now only men can speak to God (p.179). Creation now happens at the behest of the male god, thus removing the procreative process of the Feminine Principle from its divine status. Mary Daly (as cited in Lerner, 1986a) has called patriarchy “the Religion of Reversals” (p.224). This symbolic devaluation of women in relation to the divine, states Lerner “becomes one of the founding metaphors of Western civilization. The other founding metaphor is supplied by Aristotelian philosophy, which assumes as a given that women are incomplete and damaged human beings of an entirely different order than men” (Lerner, 1986a, p.10; Noddings, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). On this point, Aristotle regarded the female body as defective; duBios notes that Aristotle defined a women’s status in abstract principles they are no longer metaphorical equivalents to the fertile earth to be ploughed, but are measured against the male and found to be imperfect, not whole like the male (duBios, 1988, p.184).

If we turn our attention to the historical context of Genesis we will find that creation mythology comes out of the same environment setting as that of Mesopotamia (Coote & Ord, 1991, p.49). Research from Dimont demonstrates how a duality runs through early Jewish history in the fact that the supreme deity as Yahweh/Elohim is maker of creation (Dimont, 1962, p.40; Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.420; Kirk, 1970). Waugh (2002),
contends, “the ancient Canaanites believed Asherah to be the female consort of their, supreme deity, El, and when El was usurped by the Jewish Yahweh who became the one and only god of all the universe, the [G]oddess Asherah was, for a while at least, dragged along to be his consort” (Waugh, 2002, p.27, Maggee, 2005, p.81, Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.454; Johnson, 1994). Waugh (2002) notes, “inscriptions, recently discovered, describe sanctuary dedications to ‘Yahweh and his Asherah’ but, for all this, God did not have a wife for long, as powerful Yahwist prophets were hell-bent on divorce” (p.35). Documentation from the Old Testament provides substantiated proof for the celebration and over-throw of the Great Mother Goddess in the enthronement of Yahweh as the divine ‘puppet master’ who remains forever powerful:

Learn that I, I alone, am God; And that there is no God before me; It is I who bring both death and life; I who inflict wounds and heal them; And from my hand there is no rescue (Deut 32:39-42).

The content of the Book of Joshua is a celebration of anti-pagan polemic promoting a ‘holy war’ against the feminine, thus bringing an end the reign of the Goddess (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.428). The text, note Baring and Cashford, continues to describe the destruction of Canaan as a “divine cleansing” in the battle for principalities between the god of the Hebrews and the Goddess of the Canaanites (p.428). The book closes with the Hebrew peoples reaffirming their covenant With God:

Far be it from us to forsake our Lord for the service of other gods. For it was the Lord, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt (Joshua 24: 16-17).

If we extend this analysis, the Bible has been, and remains, a moral religious guide that has pre-ordained the position of women, despite the fact that for thousands of years both Hebrew and pagan religions existed simultaneously among closely neighbouring peoples (Stone, 1976, p.3; Patai, 1978; Gaines, 1999; Hazelton, 2007). Stone contends “archaeological, mythological, and historical evidence all reveal that female religion”, she continues “far from naturally fading away, (female religion) was the victim of centuries of continual persecution and suppression by advocates of the newer religion which held male deities as supreme” (p.3). The fact that the Old Testament associated Eve and the Serpent with death is highly significant as the myth is an inversion of the
Mother Goddesses regenerative cycle of life and renewal (Ruether, 2005; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). From this time symbols, and metaphors of the feminine are regarded as evil: the severing of the snake from the fertility goddess saw them cast out by God (Lerner, 1986a, p.197; Baring & Cashford, 1991). In this way the snake instead of being a symbol of regeneration, and renewal becomes associated with evil and sin (p.197). It is clear, argues Lerner, “in the writing of the Book of Genesis creativity and procreativity are ascribed to an all powerful God, whose epithets of ‘Lord’ and ‘King’ establish him as a male god, and female sexuality other than for procreative purposes becomes a sin and evil” (1986a, p.197).

Coote and Ord (1991) indicate that like other creation stories the view found within Genesis is related to the social situation from which it springs. By the 6th century the Aaronid priests are in control of the myths, re-conceptualising and re-creating the creation stories of Genesis 1:1-26, 4:1-26, to fit within a framework on how the world began (p.49). Genesis 1:1-26 is understood as Primeval History by way of which creation of the world takes place with all the creatures in it, while Genesis 4:1-26, marks the beginning of human history tracing the direct descendants from Adam and Eve. On balance, one could argue that the Bible is written for a particular point of view, thus remaining as a political manifesto for one male gendered god (Miles, 1996, p.5). Miles’ study found “the Bible is not just words about God but also the word of God: He is its author as well as its protagonist. But wether the ancient writers who wrote the Bible created God or merely wrote down God’s revelation of himself, their work has been, in literary terms, a staggering success” (p.5).

Miles notes philosophers of religion, “sometimes claimed that gods are projections of human personality, and so it may be” (p.4). Paul Tillich and Martin Buber (as cited in Dimont, 1962), protestant and Jewish existential theologians, “hold that it is the relationship in which man thinks exists between him and God that...shape[s] history” (p.21). Dimont (1962) argues the Talmud changed the relationship between man and God, as it “exercised a decisive influence in directing the course of the Jewish history for fifteen hundred years... anchor[ing it] in Written Law” (p.162). Ruether notes modern-day rabbis interpret the ancient commandments as evidence for the present-day conflict between the Arabs and the Jews (Waugh, 2002, p.307). Up till now, renouncing the creativity of the Feminine ‘Other’ at the macro and micro level of consciousness in
favour of male centred ethics, any particular society can accentuate one or the other through their interaction with the world “depending on the demands of the environment or shaping influences of its inventions” (Shlain, 1999, p.27). Robert Logan (as cited in Shlain, 1999), author of the Alphabet Effect adds his voice to Shlain’s hypothesis by contending: “A person who is literate has a different world view than one that receives information exclusively through oral communication” (p.2).

In a real sense, espouses Leeming (1981), “a society loses its soul when it can no longer experience myth” (p.5). Having said this, it also should be noted that “When we lose our ability to feel the mythic [the imagined creative world of the Feminine]…we lose contact with that which is most basically and universally human” (p.5). Tragically all too often we lose sight of the feminine energy that sustains and renews life while patriarchy promotes an epistemology of fear, separation, power and control. Power is embedded in belief – we have a choice.

The World Soul

In The Feminine Soul Union with the Father, Robinson Jnr. notes how ancient alternative scriptures viewed the Feminine: in Gnostic teachings “the soul is female” in the sense that “the Greek word for soul, psyche is feminine” (Robinson Jnr., 2005, p.1). Kirk (1970) comments on the theories of James Hillman (as cited in Kirk, 1970) explaining it is the “soul rather than the ego that experiences archetypes through myths – myth serves to open up to the soul’s own depths” (p.45). Matthews contends that the “World Soul” is a “metaphor for the Earth-Mother, permeating our consciousness of the Feminine Principle at many levels” (Matthews, 1992, p.34). In Sophia Goddess of Wisdom: the Divine Feminine from Black Goddess to World Soul, Matthews (1992) describes how the goddess, as the Divine Feminine, is perceived to be Mother to the entire planet (Ruether, 2005; Christ & Plaskow, 2016), this concept eventually leads to the birth of the “Anima Mundi or World-Soul” (Matthews, 1992, p.34). In The Separation from Nature and the loss of the Feminine aspects of Spirit, the desecration of the “Anima Mundi or World Soul” argues Baring (2014), is the loss of the Feminine, or loss of Soul, “we have the lost the holy unity of the planet, and reverence for the inter-connection in all aspects of life” (p.1). When a civilization has a male image of God
presiding over religious institutions that have been created entirely by men, glorifying power over Nature, and is patriarchal in outlook “how long can the silenced voice of the Feminine, the voice of the Soul be heard” (p.1)? Laura and Chalender (2012) add their voices arguing that the Judeo-Christian attitude towards women and nature has led to a form of “gender elitism legitimized covertly by discriminatory Biblical presumption which they call patriarchal theism (p.175). Conceptual connections have been made between women and nature to the extent that a discriminatory form of consciousness and the epistemology that underpins such presumptions has been to legislate that “man has dominion over the entire world” (p.175). Baring (2014) asks how can we again acknowledge the sacredness of the earth and the cosmos, and again bring ourselves into harmonious relationship with them (p.1)?

Whitmont (1987) notes, “the Feminine is not concerned with achieving or ideating: it is not heroic or self-willed bent upon battling against opposition; rather, it exists in the here and now, an endless flow” in the great circle of life (p.43). We are, as it were, at a crossroads, how can we awaken the soul to the Masculine and Feminine Principles? To the great mysteries of life; all of nature; soul and integrated wholeness; Artress argues “we must integrate the faculties of the mind with the images of the soul, we need to nurture whole vision, empathy, patience, organic unfolding and movement, intuition, community, and a reverence for nature” (Artress, 1995, p.157; Christ, 2018a.). These same principles bear out in the presence of quantum physics showing us being and becoming. “All life forms have unique roles in this process, the primary focus of which is creation itself rather than formal religion” (O’Murchu, 2013, p.83). In a quantum universe, notes O’Murchu, “birth, death and rebirth is an unceasing process” nothing is unrelated (p.82). Teasdall (2001) points out how the “mystics and some enlightened philosophers (such as Plotinus, Spinoza, and Hegel in the West, and Shankara and Nargarjuna in the East) have known and proclaimed the essential interconnectedness of all things” (p.71). Western cosmology, however, has been dominated by a materialistic view that reduced all reality, matter, and energy to the lowest level of manifested being (p.71). At this point argues Teasdall “the thinkers who shaped the Western scientific approach are locked into a mechanistic straightjacket without room for the divine” (71). Matthews (1992) extends this analysis to Plato’s idea of implicit dualism arguing that his cosmological view had far reaching consequences (p.86).
For Plato, contends Matthews, “reality was to be found in the world of ideas, not in their manifestation in the world of forms, this gives us our current idea that nature is inferior” (p.86). This implicit philosophical dualism was reflected in the subsequent Western understanding of the earth, the natural world and woman (p.86). Plumwood (1993) notes Plato and Aristotle viewed the world in terms of a hierarchy “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled, this principle of necessity extends to all mankind” (p.46). In his infamous passage from Politics Aristotle links the dualisms “arising from human domination of nature, male domination over females, the master’s domination over slaves, and reason’s domination over the body and emotions, and he gives his version of each hierarchy’s place in the chain” (p.46). Since the relationship is seen as one of superior and inferior order, “it is fitting and natural in canons of virtue for a good wife, are written in terms of usefulness to the centre” (p.53). Those on the lower side of the dualisms (as in wife) are expected to forsake their own interests, are conceived as a means to an end thus setting up a double standards outside of the bounds of morality altogether (p.53). Ancient societies saw patterns, and meaning in everything, including the world of Nature. Western epistemology realised Aristotelian metaphysics particularly in its attitude towards women, nature and the entire planet. Today we are still suffering from this misunderstanding and its associated problems of domination, separation, and destruction: seeing and creating from this perspective is tantamount to our downfall.

**Who Creates Life?**

As the Bronze Age progresses, one story stands out as a constant in the Near East. Eliade (1981) notes that the story of the Goddess, and her half-divine, half-human, son-consort was prevalent across Bronze Age mythology (p.64; Lerner, 1986a; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Markale, 1999; Stone, 1976; Ruether, 2005). Baring and Cashford (1991) identify how “the story comes to life in the poetry of Summerier because, for the first time, we can listen to the words and visualise images that tell the story of death and resurrection of a god, alongside of the Goddess’s search for him in the Underworld” (p.162; p.207). The myth is indicative of the eternal return light must overcome darkness in order for life to begin anew. In order to bring forth new life the world must
first be annihilated; Eliade (1981) suggests the “pre-cosmogonic chaos”, also implied, is “the ritual death of the king and his descent to the Underworld”. In essence, three cosmic modalities which define “life/death; chaos/cosmos; sterility/fertility; constituted the three moments of a single process” (p.67). This mystery, argues Eliade “perceived after the discovery of agriculture, becomes the principle of a unified explanation of the world, of life, and of human existence; it transcends the vegetable drama, since it also governs the cosmic rhythms, human destiny and relation with the gods” (p.67).

The story of the eternal return is duplicated in the mythology of Egypt: Isis marries her brother/husband Osiris, who is killed at the hands of his brother Seth, the whole earth remains barren until she finds the pieces of his dismembered body and assembles them back together again (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.146; Markale, 1999; Stone, 1976). In Canaan one of the primary myths is the enthronement of Baal as king, who dies and returns with Anath in the spring (Patai, 1978, p.37). Greece saw a re-enactment of the same drama with the Goddess Demeter losing her daughter Persephone to Hades, the god seizes her away from the light to be his bride below in the Underworld, hence the earth becomes barren (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.146; Markale, 1999; Stone, 1976). Persephone returns in the spring with the promise of a bountiful earth; Markale adds the re-enactment of the Goddess Demeter’s “mysteries” at Eleusis later on become the myths of the Iron Age, telling a similar story of Cybele and the shepherd boy Attis; Aphrodite and Adonis, finally Jesus, son of the Virgin Mother Mary, who dies and descends into hell for three days, the number of days in darkness only to return (Markale, 1999, p.57; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Stone, 1976). In this sense, the virgin mother gives back life to her son-lover and presents him triumphantly, thus signifying the victory over death (Markale, 1999, p.57). The message conveyed is that the god who is first born from the Goddess, and then unites with her on equal terms as her consort, is then a living and dying aspect of the timeless whole, the eternal matrix (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.162).

**Defeat of the Goddess**

At this point contend Baring and Cashford (1991), a new paradigm of consciousness begins with a split between the old and the new orders, expressed here as a conflict...
between a goddess and a god, and can be traced through the Iron Age down to our own
culture (p.281). As the Bronze Age moves towards the Iron Age a new pattern enters
human evolution. It is terror, not the terror of nature, but the terror of death at human
hands (p.172). People became enslaved by the thousands, catastrophic events caused by
famine, and war bringing about death and destruction. With the rise of the all-powerful
king the epic came into being celebrating the warrior hero (p.172). With the rise of
Babylon, power previously wielded by the first Sumerians, followed by the Arkadians
shifted to the Babylonians (p.194). From now on, the mythic culture ruled by a male
deity is one of mastery and control, expressing the desire to shape and order what has
been created (p.281; Ruether, 2005). Female sexuality has been severed from creation:
natural human relations are reversed translating the First Mother into the ultimate
destroyer, the Creator-Goddess into the Monster of Chaos (Keller, 1988, p.78). In his
search for immortality the warrior-hero represses and oppresses the woman-identified
energies (in himself, in others, in nature), thus turning them into a raving monstrosity
(Keller, 1988, p.78; Ruether, p.48). The Babylonian hero-creator god Marduk
vanquishes and dismembers the primordial first Mother creating the earth, sea, and sky
from her lifeless body: “He [Marduk] shot off an arrow, and it tore her interior; It cut
through her inward parts, it split (her) heart; When he had subdued her, he destroyed her
life” (E.E. 4.97.40).

Not satisfied, Marduk “sacrifices her second consort Kingu, and in doing so creates
humanity from his slain victim’s blood mixed with water (Ruether as cited in Waugh,
2002, p.48). Marduk’s primacy over the primordial Goddess by the male warrior-god
heralds a new shaping of the ancient world in the re-creation of the cosmic order (p.48).

Instead of the goddess sacrificing her son-lover, “the goddess is herself sacrificed by a
being of her own creation: the young god, her great-great-great-grandson” (Baring &
become the demons and monsters to be defeated by the next; ancient splendours are
turned into nagging terrors” (Campbell, 1988, p.74). The image of the “Ferocious
dragon” is believed to have been in existence since the beginning of human
development (Knapp, 1997, p.38). Jung reasons “monstrous serpents come directly out
of the collective unconscious” (Markale, 1999, p.3). Having said this, Knapp’s study
found that there are various meanings associated with dragons, but the one most
prevalent is the frequent relationship with the Feminine, in this sense, they are considered to be the personification of female power from which men have ever been trying to extricate themselves (Knapp, 1997, p.38). The slaying of ferocious dragon-mother is carried out in similar manner by the young Greek god Apollo who must first kill the Pythian serpentine-monster-goddess before he can establish his cult and oracular power in Delphi, transferring religious control purposely from women to men (Kirk, 1970, p.86; Penglase, 1994, p.105; Young, 1994, p.xxiii; Mann, 1999, p.12; Markale, 1999, pp.3-4). The victory of male ascendancy is the perfect transparent symbol of a radical change in consciousness: the transition from the concept of Mother Goddess into father god, thus bringing about a new world order (Markale, 1999, p.4).

Motifs of ferocious dragons are present within the framework of Genesis, creation emerges out of chaos, “the unformed”, in Hebrew “tehom the deep” (Phillips, 1984, p.5). Phillips contends that “tehom” in turn is related to Tiamat, Rahab, and Leviathan (Lothan), he further explains how all the names for the chaotic dragon in Mesopotamia, and Canaanite tradition are the formless dark menacing female of the Enuma Elish, and as such the transparent image of Marduk is thus superimposed upon Yahweh (Phillips, 1984, p.5; Night & Levine, 1989). The theology of Genesis cannot admit primordial struggles between deities, because there are no deities to struggle with. God is one, and he alone is divine: the material from which the creation of the universe occurs is not of his substance or any other divine material; he creates out of nothing; neutral stuff which has no identity (p.7). The dominant hierarchy of masculinity places a new emphasis upon the formless air and sky, those of war and aggression rather than the fertile female form (Mann, 1999, p.140). Yahweh will not tolerate any other metaphysical perspective, as a warrior he must time and again battle against the evil dragon-mother (Phillips, 1984, p.8). Phillips notes astutely that “the beginning of civilisation seems to require seizure of religious power by male gods, in order to break the ties of humanity to blood, soil, and nature” (p.13). The secrets of life are taken from the Mother Goddess by the hero-god in his quest for immortality. Female sexuality has been severed from creation while the law of patriarchy is given divine status as symbols and metaphors of the Feminine are inverted and identified as evil. A severing of the snake from the fertility goddess transpires, as both are cast out by God.
Ancient sources on the Worth of a Woman

Lerner contends that “one of the most challenging tasks in Woman’s History is to trace with precision the various modes in which patriarchy appears historically”, she explains how, the shifts and changes that women’s history receives, in its structure and function, and the “adaptations it makes to female pressure and demands” (Lerner, 1986a, p.239). Men and women are biologically different but the values and implications based on that difference are the result of culture (p.6), not biology. Women’s inferiority and subordination is based on male dominated ethics, of a patriarchal disposition, that have become institutionalised and part of history (Lerner, 1986a; Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Ruether, 1989, 2005; Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001; Johnson, 1994; Fiorenza, 1985). The major gender symbols and metaphors of Western civilisation were largely derived from Mesopotamian, and later Hebrew sources (p.11). The period of the establishment of ‘patriarchy’, suggests Lerner, “was not one ‘event’ but a process developing over a period of nearly 2,500 years, from approximately 3,100 to 600BCE it occurred, even within the Near East, at a different pace and at different times in several distinct societies” (p.8). For example, in Mesopotamia during the third millennium BCE (3,000BCE – 2,000BCE) under the reign of Urukagina, this time-frame gives an insight into male tyranny, and the reality of a woman’s life (p.63). As Stone and Shlain note, one particular law code reads “if a woman speaks out against her man, her mouth shall be crushed with a hot brick” (Stone, 1976 p.63; Shlain, 1999, p.45). However, there remains a marked disparity between the reality of this statement, to the life of Enheduanna, the daughter of the first King Sargon of Akkad 2,285-2,250BCE, her name, has survived in history from the earliest times (Mark, 2014, p.1; Cojocaru, 2011, p.7; Kirk, 1970, p.85; Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.199; Lerner, 1986, p.49; Rohrlich, 1980, p.86). Mark (2009) points out that it is through her, “Sargon manipulated religious, political, and cultural affairs from afar” (Mark, 2009, p.5; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Ruether, 2005). As scholars have illustrated, within the Sumerian city-state of Ur, Enheduanna is a High Priestess of the Goddess Inanna; she is highly educated, she is the first women poet in recorded history to dedicate hymns to Inanna, Queen of Heaven (Mark, 2014, p.1; Cojocaru, 2011, p.7; Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.199; Lerner, 1986b, p.49; Kirk, 1970, p.85). With her work titled, Enheduanna, Mark (2014) describes how Enheduanna made an important contribution to history by composing hymns in her own
name, and as such transformed Mesopotamian theology, “her work is still remembered and honored in present day and poems are still composed on the model she created over 4,000 years ago” (p.3). However, she is the one exception to the rule, as her accomplishments are in sharp contrast to the lives of her contemporaries.

In Babylon, during the second millennium BCE, women’s existence is totally controlled by men, while some women did enjoy economic independence, along with a high status in society, the majority of women are mere “species of property” subject to patriarchal whim (Lerner, 1986b, p.140; Ruether, 2005). Lerner (1986a) argues convincingly how the Code of Hammurabi, around 1,792 to 1,750 BCE, became the first model for social institutions, setting the tone for the patriarchal demands of the dominant males, and as such the father had the power over life and death (Lerner, p.90; Johns, 1910-1911, p.8). Husbands could divorce or drown their partners if they “had been bad”, wives and children were mere commodities to pay off debts (Lerner, 1986a, p.90). Sons’ were responsible to their male elders, learning by their example, hence perpetuating the “sins of the fathers” (p.90). If we compare the life of a woman under the laws of Hammurabi and that of early Hebrew women who were governed by the cultural practices of the Old Testament, conceptually life is very similar as women are utilised as pawns - from earlier times the Jewish male adult had complete authority over members of his family. His wife was expected to call her husband ‘baal’ or ‘master’ in the family structure. In Heart of a Heartless World: Religion as Ideology Mann (1999) notes from the Old Testament we learn that the Decalogue listed “the wife amongst a man’s possessions, she ‘belongs’ to him along with his servants, his ox and his ass” (Ex. 20:17).

Monogamy was expected, Lerner (1986a) points to the double standards of the Hebrew male, while expecting virginity, and his wife to be faithful, men enjoyed complete sexual freedom in and out of marriage (p.90). A central concern of this piece is to show how women’s lives have been affected by male-centred ethics and how their influence differed markedly from developing societies down to historical times. Like her Hebrew sister, the Athenian wife was expected to bare male children, as Thornton (1997) notes in Eros: the Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality, marriage is a “technology” that has to fit within the paradigm of social order (p.191); a woman must be cultivated to maximise her productivity. In this sense, the function of marriage is to exploit a woman’s procreative power in order to provide citizens for the city (p.162). The law in historical
Athens placed her in a position of strict subjugation, albeit deprived of almost every right, and as Lerner (1986a) contends “were legally lifelong minors under the guardianship of a male” (p.202; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Ruether, 2005; Christ & Plaskow, 2016).

If we turn our focus to women in Celtic literature and society, we will find that in the early period of recorded history “Celtic society was attempting to retain an order in which women were harmoniously balanced in relation to men” (Ellis, 1995, p.19). Peter Beresford Ellis (1995) contends in *Celtic Women: Women in Celtic society and literature*, the image of Celtic women “has been conjured as the totem of the emancipated female... Over the years there has arisen a debate as to whether women in Celtic history and culture, were possessed of a more privileged position than their sisters in other European cultures” (p.15, Devlin-Glass, 2001). One of the most famous historical females in the Celtic world is legendary Queen of the Iceni, Boudicca, who took on the Roman might. As Ellis explains, it is the Roman historian Tacitus, whose father-in-law Agricola witnessed the battle, and as such puts words into her mouth: “I do not come to boast the pride of my ancestry, nor even to recover the plundered wealth of my family. I take to the field like an ordinary citizen among you, to assert the cause of liberty; to seek justice for my body, scarred by the Roman lash, and to avenge my raped daughters” (p.16).

Women feature prominently in Celtic mythology and were the realities of early Celtic society. Medb (Anglicised as Maeve) is perhaps the best known of Celtic mythological heroines; she is the famous queen of Connacht, who appears as a literary reincarnation of the Sovereignty Goddess (Ellis, 1995, p.42). In the famous epic of the *Táin bó Cúailnge*, Kinsella (1970) points to the discussion taking place in the royal bed between Medb and her husband Ailil, as they compare their wealth, assets, and sexual equality:

*If I married a mean man our union would be wrong, because I'm so full of grace and giving. It would be an insult if I were more generous than my husband, but not if the two of us were equal in this. If my husband was a timid man our union would be wrong because I thrive, myself, on all kinds of trouble. It is an insult for a wife to be more spirited than her husband, but not if the two are equally spirited* (p.52).
Briffault (1969 Vol. 1) explains how in Irish traditional myths the women and goddesses play the chief part, and the narratives clearly show this (p.420). Tacitus tells us that amongst the Britons, “the laws make no distinction between the sexes” he reports with considerable surprise how British prisoners brought before the Emperor Claudius pay due homage to the Empress Agrippa who was sitting some distance away from the Emperor “a novel thing truly exclaims Tacitus indignantly, and most opposed to the spirit of our ancestors – that a woman should sit before Roman ensigns” (p.420). It was after the introduction of Christianity that Celtic woman rapidly began to lose their prestige and status (Ellis, 1995, p.17). In The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland, Mary Condren (1989) contends the teachings of Saint Augustine of Hippo, deemed woman as inferior and “not in the image of God: whereas the man alone is the image of God as fully and completely” (p.17). Augustine’s ideas are born out of Classical Greek mythology and Aristotelian philosophy whereby women are not seen as complete persons, only chattels, as will become obvious in the following work.

**Defilement and the Laws of the Father**

It has already been accepted that cults of sacred sexuality were practiced in the Ancient Near East and among the Israelites to varying degrees (Gur-Klien, 2003, p.4). Temple prostitution was practiced in ancient Babylon, as Lerner (1986b) contends it was accepted belief that the gods and goddesses actually lived within the temple precinct (p.225; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Stuckey, 2001). Every year the role between the sacred prostitute, representing the fertility goddess, and the priest or king, representing the god-king, would re-enact the symbolic mythical rite of the “sacred marriage” thus ensuring the fertility of the land and the communities survival. On this subject, the caring of the gods/goddess constituted the offering of sexual services from which a class of religious “temple prostitutes” developed (Lerner, 1986b, p.225; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eliade, 1996; Ruether, 2005). For people who considered fertility sacred, and essential to their own survival, it follows that the caring of the gods”, as Lerner concludes, “included in some cases, offering them sexual services” (Lerner, 1986b, p.125). As Briffault’s (1969) research notes, “many rites of sacred prostitution are
described as sex with a stranger to the early mind there is always the possibility that the stranger may be an avatar of that god or the god in disguise (Vol.3, p.203). Wright (2010) describes how the fifth century, Greek historian Herodotus, and the Roman Strabo point out how every woman born in the country must once in her life go and sit in the precinct of Venus [Mylitta], and there consort with a stranger (Lerner, 1986b, p.225; Kirk, 1970, p.163). In Sexual Hospitality in the Hebrew Bible, Gur-Klien (2003) notes how:

*a theme of sexual hospitality turns up in the Bible as a Jewish custom of guest friendship, to this the prophets unwittingly served as authentic reporters (Hosea 1-4; Ezekiel 16, 22; Jeremiah 3:2-3; Jeremiah 7:18; Jeremiah 44:15-26). The fact that it was forbidden and vehemently opposed to, speaks for an early cultic history and the irresistible influence of neighbouring cultures (p.4).

Lerner’s (1986a) research notes text within the Old Testament reveal how there was a gradual restriction placed on women’s lives, a lessening of her services as a sacred prostitute within cultic functions, and “an ever increasing regulation of her sexuality as the Jewish tribes move from confederacy to statehood” (p.177). This may explain the ever-increasing restrictions on women’s behavior and the excessive language of censure used by the patriarchs against “women’s ‘whoring’ and finally the pervasive use of woman-the-whore as a metaphor for a sinning society” (p.177). There is, however, the question that arises from the consistent xenophobic behavior of the prophets in their preoccupation with fighting the cult of Asherah and Baal, while exhibiting double standards in the patriarchal practice of “guest friendship”.

In Sex and Family in the Bible and Middle East, Raphael Patai (1978) offers a survey of customs and traditions regarding family values and sexuality in the Ancient Middle East and patriarchal hospitality by its own nature was so highly regarded that it overrode a woman’s chastity (Patai, as cited in Gur-Klien, 2003, p.2). The custom seems inherently male orientated, as it concerns a situation of patriarchal hospitality, in which female chastity is exploited in favor for the pleasure of a male guest (p.3). In a society where a male could be your potential enemy, Antonelli (2004) notes the custom of “hospitality prostitution” conferred honorary brotherhood upon the stranger: rejection was tantamount to the declaration of war (p.105). The significance of this act is born out in text of Genesis 19:1-12, presents the story of Lot in Sodom, and the story of the Levite
found in Judges 19-21, which deal indirectly with the exploitation of women (Lerner, 1986a, p.172). In Genesis 19, the story of two angels in the form of two strangers, come as visitors to Lot’s house in Sodom. Lot provides hospitality for his guests and asks them to stay for the night, however during the night an angry mob from Sodom surrounded the house and demand Lot to: “bring them/strangers out to us that we may know them” (Genesis 19: 5).

In order to save his own skin and that of his guests, Lot without any form of hesitation, gives over his virgin daughters to the angry mob (Genesis 19: 8). A similar story appears in Judges 19:22-29 which tells the story of a Levite and his concubine who stay the night in the Benjamite town of Gibeah. They are given hospitality by old man who regrettablly, finds his house surrounded by angry mob of male townspeople who demand the Levite be handed over so they might “know” him (Gur-Klien, 2003, p.3). Gur-Klien’s study has found to “know” is a euphemism for “knowing someone sexually” (p.3). In Compulsory Heterosexuality in Biblical Narratives and their Interpretations: Reading Homophobia and Rape in Sodom and Gibeah, Cardin (1999) explains how “rabbinic Judaism has read Sodom and Gomorrah as a locus of cruelty, inhospitality and xenophobia”, issues of patriarchy, and homosexual panic are foremost (p.1). In her argument against these awful atrocities Phylis Trible contends the parallel stories in Genesis 19, and the outrage at Gibeah found in Judges 19-29, are “texts of terror for women” (Trible, as cited in Cardin, 1999, p.2). Women find themselves being either, gang raped or murdered.

Scott Mann (1999) argues, “the most important substitute for violence or the threat of violence as a means of social control is ideology” (p.179). Carol Delaney’s work (Delaney as cited in Cardin, 1999) is very insightful in understanding gender processes in Mediterranean cultures, out of which come the biblical narratives. Crucial for her is the concept of “monogenesis”, her term for an understanding that it is “men [who] /give life, women merely give birth, procreation is understood in terms of seed and soil and thus the male role is to plant the seed; the female role is to transform and bring it forth, women are thus fields that must be fenced in and possessed by their men” (p.51).

Delaney’s (as cited in Cardin, 1999) argument is based on Aristotelian biology and although “Galen held that male as well as the female contributed substance…male substance was still held to be generative and formative” (p.51). In Greek mythology, the
story of Athena’s birth from the head of her father Zeus, can be seen as what the
German philosopher of history Johan Bachofen (1967) calls ‘Father-right’, was
established over the order of ‘Mother-right’, whereby the female’s life-giving purposes
are taken over by the male (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.336; Christ, 2020). Laura and
Buchanan (2012) note “by devaluing the gifts of the divine feminine it became
increasingly easier to elevate the concept of a male god whose remit was largely
proscribed as ‘virtues’ of conquest, protection, provision, judgement and retributive
punishment” (p.171). Ergo, in the Eumenides (as cited in Baring & Cashford, 1991),
second play of Aeschylus’ Oresteia, Apollo appropriates the birth of Athena as
justification for children belonging only to fathers. Carol Christ author of the Matricide
Basic to Patriarchies Birth adds her voice, noting that the second play is based on
matricide; here the killing of Clytemnestra is executed by her son Orestes for the bloody
murder of his father (Christ, 2020, p.3). A trial is authorised by Athena consisting of
twelve Athenian men as jury, along with the Furies who stand as judges. The verdict
rests on a tied vote (p.4). It is at this point that the claims of patriarchy-against-
matriarchy become not merely absurd but alarming: “The mother is no parent of that
which is called her child, but only nurse of the new-planted seed that grows” (Baring &
Cashford, 1991, p.336). Appolo upholding the values of the father-line declares “the
parent is he who mounts” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.336; Christ, 2020). Athena
confirms Apollo’s argument by stating “There was no mother that gave me birth”
(Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.337; Christ, 2020). It is the father-line, augues Christ that
is advanced as a higher value than the mother-line, maternal values are discredited.
Students are taught that the ‘Furies’ represent revenge rather than justice, inasmuch as
they come from the ancient line of the Mother, whereas Orestes, Athena and Apollo
uphold patriarchal principles (p.5). Orestes is justified in killing his mother because she
dared to go against the ideals of men within the patriarchy. Christ contends the breaking
of bonds between a mother and child is indicative of the entire story (p.5). Laura &
Buchanan (2012) note “the mythology of the male god thus establishes a conceptual
framework within which the male god is reconceptualised as a being whose ‘powers’
now usurp that of the goddess” (p.172).

If we consider the evidence gathered from archaeology, mythology and history, scholars
have acknowledged the fact that female religion did not disappear, but continually
suffered consistent persecution, and suppression throughout the centuries at the hands
the newer, patriarchal systems of belief, thus upholding male hegemony as supreme (Stone, 1976 p.3; Christ & Plaskow, 2016: Christ, 2020).

Polytheism versus Monotheism

Merlin Stone clarifies “for thousands of years both Hebrew and pagan religions existed simultaneously among neighbouring peoples” (p.3). The story of Jezebel, bride of the Israelite king Ahab, provides an exposé. She becomes a convenient scapegoat for biblical writers, who position blame upon her for the nation’s apostasy (Hazelton, 2007, p.5; Stone, 1976; Gaines, 1999; Kirk, 1970; Dimont, 1962). Her dramatic confrontation with the great prophet Elijah of the Israelites occurs at the crucial juncture between monotheism over polytheism. In Jezebel: the Untold Story of the Bible’s Harlot Queen, Hazelton (2007) contends “the story of Jezebel is, in fact, the foundation story of modern radical fundamentalism” (p.6). At the outset, Jezebel, as future queen of Israel is called a harlot, a sorceress, a liar, and a murderer, Hazelton notes: “she seems eminently worthy of Elijah’s terrible fatwa” (p.4).

Jezebel’s husband was Aheb king of Israel, like any new husband he indulged his wife. Being tolerant, opened minded and noting political expediency, he built her a temple dedicated to Baal and his consort Asarte/Asherah, despite being a follower of Yahweh (Gaines, 1999, p.34). Hazelton notes, “Solomon had done the same for all his foreign brides” (Hazelton, 2007, p.35). Even though foreign gods were meant to be treated respectfully, Jezebel’s worship of such antagonised Elijah, to the point that: “She was thrown down from her palace walls, torn limb from limb by dogs, devoured by them, and finally, for good measure, excreted by them: She becomes literally a woman of dung” (p.4).

The Yahweh of Elijah’s time did not possess what many people would call a modern moral sensibility. Stone’s research shows that the Levite priests were so “fanatical towards the religion of the Goddess in Canaan (though they use the term ‘other gods’ is evasively used in each passage) that laws were written prohibiting the worship of these other gods” (Stone, 1976, p.197; Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.428; Kirk, 1970, p.158). As the consort of Baal, Asherah was worshiped as the “Queen of Heaven” appearing
forty times in the Bible, as Maggee (2005) observes she “was so loved that the people refused the prophet’s pleas to turn back to Yahweh” (p.2). In the first book 1 Kings, Yahweh instructed Elijah to have every Baal worshiper in the vicinity killed (Kirk, 1970, p.158). What motivated Elijah to oppose Baal worship? What we are looking at here in a fundamental sense, is that we are dealing with a particularly xenophobic segment of society, deficient in any form of moral compass albeit thriving on sexism, while simultaneously promoting a paradigm of fear and genocide. Tragically, Elijah could not tolerate any other theological viewpoint; he sought to promote religious propaganda rather than allowing both religions to coexist side by side (Kirk, 1970, p.159). Yahweh actually started life as a Canaanite god El/Baal, and yet throughout the Bible his bitter enemy was Baal, and as Wright suggests, “over time Yahweh absorbed Baal’s personality and epithets undergoing a series of cultural assimilations accruing to one male godhead all the diverse powers traditionally ascribed to the many eco-systemic parts of the polytheistic assembly” (Wright, 2010, p.157, Ruether, 2005).

Towards Monotheism

This study has sought to expose through mythology, and also history, how the devaluation of the Feminine Principle through a patriarchal mandate has become the dominant epistemology, and the following psychological consequences this has had upon humanity. Wright notes Hammurabi was the first to install legal codes in the ancient world, Marduk as the supreme god of Babylon absorbed the functions of all the other gods becoming a unified theory of Nature (Wright, 2010, p.89). Wright notes the first legal codes to be established in the ancient world were the the law codes of Hammurabi. Hammurabi was divinely authorized to make laws citing thirty gods: a significant factor here is that it is the gods Enlil, and Anu, who assign Marduk as a great god giving him “domination over man”. Marduk absorbed the functions of the other gods, a contributing factor here is Marduk’s evolution towards monotheism was political (Wright, 2010, pp.87-89). According to the Mesopotamian Babylonia epic of creation, the Enuma Elish, Marduk had “sovereignty over the whole world” he was, however, eventually forced to share his power with another major god, at this point the divine becomes transcendent to creation (p.89).
Similarly in Egypt the residing gods were overpowered and supplanted by the new regime. In 14BC Amenhotep IV gave prominence to a single god Amun, drawing on the legacy of the sun god Re, who had been associated with a simple icon, a solar disc with two arms known as Aten which means disc. The pharaoh elevated Aten from a mediocre god to “he who decrease life – he who created the earth – he who built himself by himself – he whose sunbeams mean sight for all that he has created” (p.91). Wright notes that Aten, like Marduk, absorbed the attributes and functions of all other gods, at the height of his power he stood alone in the divine firment, a clear foreshadowing of the Hebrew god Yahweh (Wright, 2010, p.92; Shlain, 1999, p.59; Knight & Levine, 1989, p.144). Within decades his promotion to the one and only god would fall, here argues Wright, is the first coherent example of monotheism. Wright further notes “it was Marduk who had more to do with the emergence of monotheism than Aten” (Wright, 2010, p.95; Knight & Levine, 1989, p.144). He helped forge Jewish monotheism resulting from the Babylonian conquest, suffering political defeat and psychological trauma the God of the Hebrews had ‘suffered defeat in battle by the mighty Marduk’. Not only was the god of the Hebrews defeated, his temple, his home, was destroyed and his people had been stolen. The emegenge of Hebrew monotheism, notes Wright, grew out of Isreal’s deficiency in political power, “while exulting its deity inversely, as ruler of the whole universe” (Wright, 2010, p.171). If we explore the emotional texture of exilic theology we can put a finer point on its logic by analyzing what kind of deity was the Abrahmic god at the moment he became the “one true god – the moment he became God” (p.171). Some people say that Aten changed the world forever, Sigmund Freud (as cited in Wright, 2010) in Moses and Monotheism, suggested “that Moses was in Egypt during Aten’s reign and then carried the idea of monotheism towards Canaan, where it launched Judeo-Christian civilization” (p.94). Most writers of the Bible are said to have lived no earlier than 1,800BCE and possibly as late as 1,550 BCE the writing of Genesis spanned a period of roughly four hundred years, from the tenth century BCE to the fifth century BCE (Lerner, 1986, p.162). Scholars such as Lerner (1986), Dimont (1962), Shlain (1999), Baring and Cashford (1991), describe how Moses founded Jewish monotheism and the Decalogue, out of which constituted their basic laws, and codes of morality. God expected all his “chosen” people to read what “He” had written, from Sinai onwards Moses forbade the making of images and sanctioned only the written word (Shlain, 1999, p.67). Lerner (1986a) contends goddess
worship, feminine values and women’s power are depended upon the ubiquity of the image: beauty, nature, wholeness, tolerance, intuition, and art all associated with Goddess worship were repudiated (p.86).

In *From Eden to Babel: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1-11*, Gowan (1988) argues that the Old Testament is made up of archetypal stories taken up as truth, the main character within the story of Genesis is God (p.7). A present concern of this piece is the fact that the primal act of creation is a Biblical reversal, since the theology of Genesis does not permit the primordial struggle, God is one, and he alone is divine.

**The Goddess is dead**

Life is no longer regulated by the cycles of Nature because nothing can exist prior to the reality of God, humanity becomes contrary to being part of Nature, albeit the earth, and women become chattels for exploitation. John Phillips (1984) in *Eve, the History of an Idea*, states “the creation language of Genesis is not the language of Nature but the language of technology (p.12). Biblical literature has become value laden as the holistic approach has been ripped apart, while the epistemology of Genesis promotes a gendered male God who is king, and Father, he does not share his power with any female divinity (p.6). To be clear, Genesis provides the contextual evidence in the installation of parochial power for the subjugation and destruction of the Goddess. The creative role of the Feminine is removed from any representation in the Bible, as Phillips reiterates:

> the birth of humanity is no longer an act of divine union but of a single affair attributed to God...God creates out of ‘nothing’ – his self-contained masculinity guarantees that he will not have a sexual life of any kind instead his relationship is conceptualized as a covenant between himself and Israel (Isaiah 50:1-8, 62:1-5; Jeremiah 2:2-3, 20-25; 3:1-20, Hosea 1-4, 14) (p.5, p.14).

Baring and Cashford (1991) argue the writing of Genesis is not “divinely ordained fact, being the misogynistic viewpoint of the Hebrew writers promoting propaganda to keep women in their place” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.442; Ruther, 2005). With the rise of the priestly cults, and the writing of Genesis, roughly around the 11th century BCE, all of which played a significant role in the subordination of women (p.619).
Women are now excluded from public, and religious activities, while strict regulations are placed on female sexuality, coitus is only for reproduction (p.442). Any Levite priest whose daughter is caught following the old customs is to be burnt alive, a Hebrew man who has intercourse in Baal’s temple with a Canaanite priestess and spills his seed will be killed (Lev. 20:1-3).

In the previous chapter we intimated that the demise of the Feminine came about through a series of cataclysmic events. James DeMeo (2006) pointed out that climate change across the Old World dessert, from North Africa, the Near East and into central Asia led to famine, social chaos, land abandonment, and mass migration all of which led to a fundamental shift in human cultural evolution (DeMeo, 2006, p.7; DeMeo, 2013).

Bearing this in mind, Shlain (1999) asks what are the most influential aspects in shaping a child’s emotional character, “his or her immediate family and how a child learns to perceive and integrate his or her culture’s information, this medium will play a role in determining which neural pathways of the child’s developing brain will be reinforced” (p.3). Reich (as cited in DeMeo, 2006) points out babies who are raised from infancy to adulthood in this environment produce a “psychological armor” that causes a numbing or deadening of the “soft emotions” (p.7). If we apply this argument to the ancient Hebrew peoples, and the writings of the Old Testament, the findings are profound. Judaism is a religion orientated towards the Word rather than image (Gowan, 1988, p.7) I would argue that, here perhaps, is a dysfunctional culture, lorded over by a male god, who opposes, and destroys those who contradict his rules, thereby setting up a battle of principalities where the notion of empathy, love and connectivity is destroyed through the epistemology of power (Laura, Buchanan, & Chapman, 2012).

Monotheism argues Shlain (1999), “is the first religion of intolerance”, promoting a philosophy of xenophobia and an ontology of intellectual superiority (p.80). Polygamy fostered religious tolerance and as such wars based on religion did not occur in the ancient world (p.80). For the first time in history, states Shlain, “innocent people are slaughtered for the worship of their gods through their use of images, [while] the latter worshiped their god through the medium of the written word” (p.102).

But in the cities of those cities of those nations which the LORD, your God, is giving you as inheritance, you shall not leave a single soul alive. You must doom them all— the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the
The Book of Joshua describes the fierce tribalism associated with Iron Age values, and patriarchal customs all of which are reflected in the behaviour of kings, priests and prophets who uphold the deficient morality of Yahweh’s commands to maim and slaughter the ‘evil enemy’ (Baring &, Cashford, 1991, p.442). As previously noted Jezebel together with her Canaanite priests were slaughtered at the behest of Elijah and his god.

God is an abstract conception, stripped of all images monotheism is an abstract idea, killing now relates to belief in an abstract idea; while the alphabet subliminally fosters intolerance to the iconic system of belief (Shlain, 1999, p.83). The written word issued from, “Linearity, sequence, reductionism, abstraction, control, central vision, and the dominant hand” (p.44). It is not mere coincidence states Shlain, “that the first book in alphabet[ic form] is the Old Testament. There is none earlier” (p.71) Robert Logan (as cited in Shlain, 1999), author of *The Alphabet Effect*, proposed that “the occurrence of monotheism, codified law, and the alphabet, all happen[ing] at the same moment in history could not have been co-incidental...The abstractness of all three innovations were mutually reinforcing” (p.71). Despite the above arguments, Myers (2014), a biblical scholar and feminist, sites “the ancient peoples of Israel are not a patriarchal or male-dominated society (p.8). To argue “women in an ancient, non-Western society are oppressed in a patriarchal system arguably encodes a belief in the cultural superiority of modern democracies” (p.25) Patriarchy, states Myers, is a Western constructed concept formulated by anthropologists and social scientists, she then determines how sociologist Max Weber’s (1921-22) book *Wirtschaft und Gessellschaft (Economy in Society)*, was found to be the most influential work of the twentieth century (Weber, as cited in Myers, 2014, p.13). In her publication titled, *Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?*, Myers contends that there are problems in using as evidence the Hebrew Bible for the evaluation of women, but cites Biblical text as evidence to support her own analysis in the study of Hebrew women, (p.23) moreover, the women who stand out, while corresponding to Myers references in the Old Testament text, are related to the female prophets: Deborah, Miriam, Huldah, and Noadiah (p.23). Myers argues, women
functioned as “Chief Operating Officers in their households they were hardly oppressed and powerless, nor were they subordinate to male control in all aspects of the household” (p.21). Moreover, “males had control of female sexuality...male dominance was real but it was fragmentary not hegemonic. Genesis 3:16 ‘he shall rule over you’ likely concerns sexual control and not absolute male dominance” (p.27). In contrast Mann (1999), Lerner (1986a), and Antonelli (2004), advance a different argument noting monogamous marriage was well established amongst the patriarchs, virginity a prerequisite of the bride. Women are duty-bound to produce offspring especially sons, failure to do so ended in divorce, (Mann, 1999, p.231; Lerner, 1986a, p.170; Antonelli, 2004). Markale (1999) notes that the Bible does not mention daughters favourably (Markale, 1999, p.7). Even though Myers puts a favourable slant on the position of women, what she fails to realise in her publication is the double standards practiced by Hebrew men:

_Hebrew men enjoyed complete sexual freedom inside and outside of marriage including free sexual access to [their] concubines and slave women. A woman’s security in her husband’s family was limited by the fact that the husband could divorce her if she caused any ‘impediment’ to the marriage. This privilege was rarely extended to the wife_ (Mann, 1999, p.231, p.233; Antonelli, 2004).

Mann (1999) advances a contradictory argument to Myers by noting “the use of female infidelity was looked upon as the ultimate sin with death as the end result for both parties” he then adds “wives had little protection against false accusations of adultery” (p.231). Stone (1976) further states, the accusation of adultery was “so serious that it was regarded as analogous to the betrayal of Yahweh – Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hose, and Nahum all used the sexual metaphor extensively” (p.200) As I have principally argued to be female, as a wife, daughter or concubine was precarious at best due too the difference in creation (Fiorenza, 1985). Moreover, the treatment of her body is a reflection of the patriarchal values, being of little worth other than for the reproduction of sons. The god king and Father demanded absolute obedience, man as in male was the chosen gender governing all forms of social behaviour. The behaviour of men is justified by the commands of Yahweh leaving little room for an alternative point of view. The brutality of wars waged against an ‘evil enemy’ has greatly influenced both Christianity and Islam which look upon the Old Testament as divine revelation (Baring
& Cashford, 1991, p.443). The idea of Holy War has echoed down through the ages in the Christian Crusades, the persecution of heretics, burning of witches, “and the enemies of God”. As Bearing and Cashford astutely write “the image of ‘holy war’ against the goddess Tiamat and Yahweh’s war against living Canaanites has endured a long time, and still persists today whenever a tribal image of the divine is thought to sanction murder (p.443).

**Conclusion**

This chapter sought to trace the journey, and subsequent demise of the Great Goddess from the Bronze Age through to the Iron Age, a time span roughly beginning around 3,500BCE and ending around 1,250BCE. The Iron Age marked the rise of her son-lover who ascends into the singular, patriarchal god of monotheism. Creation occurs through the abstract spoken Word of a male god rather than coming from the all-encompassing womb of the Great Mother, thus initiating patriarchal hegemony in both religion and culture. With the invention of the alphabet and the written word, the creative aspect of the left-brain is gradually replaced by rational thought, dualism and right brain logic. One could argue that the Bible was written from a masculine point of view that pre-ordained the position of women, as Miles (1996) succinctly points out, “you can learn a lot from what is excluded rather than what is included” (p.5).
Chapter 3: The Power of the Word

Introduction

The research explicated in Chapter 2 traced the journey of the Great Mother Goddess and her subsequent demise from the Bronze Age (3,500BC), through to the Iron Age finishing around 1,250BCE. This particular epoch is marked by the rise of the God-king of monotheism promoting an androcentric agenda that opposes the earlier myths of creation. Worship of a central male god arose out of ancient Summerier, Mesopotamia Babylon, crossing to Egypt, adopted by the Hebrews and coming to a climax with the birth of Christianity and Islam. Conception directly occurs through the power of the ‘word’ [my italics] creation occurs by command, not in the nurturing womb of the Goddess Mother. As previously noted, around 1,700BCE, the Babylonian king Hammurabi elevated the god Marduk as the main deity of his city-state, thus conferring male hegemony (Shlain, 1999, p.51). According to Leonard Shlain (1999), (neuro surgeon and academic), it was during this time that Hammurabi composed his written law codes in cuneiform, whereby the invention of the alphabet and the written word negated the creative feminine aspect of the right-brain, being replaced gradually by masculine rational thought, dualism, and left-brain logic (p.viii). The introduction of literacy brought about a decline of the feminine archetype. Not only has the Goddess been usurped in favour of a masculine deity, but women themselves become subjects to be dominated and controlled.

In extending this argument to the present chapter my aim is to show how monotheism’s struggle against the fecund mother threatened to engulf the rational soul of man. When all is said and done, the Bible was written a long time ago, in a place, culture, and language quite different from our own, this being so, its influence still impacts upon the lives and relationships of millions of men and women today. From Mircea Eliade’s (1959) perspective in The Sacred and the Profane, “religious people attempt to live in harmony with their gods by imitating, whenever possible, the action of the gods, this faithful repetition of divine models has a twofold result:

1. by imitating the gods, man [sic] remains sacred, hence in reality.
2. by continuous re-actualisation of the paradigmatic divine gestures, the world is sanctified. Men’s [sic] religious behaviour contributes to maintaining the sanctity of the world (p.96).

Young explains that “in other words, what men do is sacred and what women do is profane” (Young, 1994, p.viii). In this sense, the text of the Old Testament provides us with an example that begins and ends with text disparaging women for their actions (Gen., 1: 1-28, 3:1-21, 1 Kings, 21:23-28). The Book of Leviticus adds further material to the anti-woman, anti-pagan polemic by critiquing Judaism’s struggle against the fruitful mother, as well as her maternal cults traditionally employed, and carried out by women (Denike, 2003, p.19). Ruether (2005) notes “Israel takes on feminine qualities as the prophets develop language casting Israel as God’s bride” primarily used to condemn and polemicise against the male elites for their alliances with foreign powers around them: Egypt, Assyria, and smaller powers such as Tyre which jeopardise the independence of Israel (p.81). These alliances typically brought in foreign cults into the capital cities of Israel and Judah as Ahab for instance did in the northern kingdom by creating an alliance with Tyre and his subsequent marriage to Jezebel who was allowed to bring her Phoenician Baal cult, seen as idolatrous by the prophets (p.81). The prophets then used the metaphor of Israel as ‘whore’ and the unfaithful wife to God in order to denounce the elites entering into these alliances (p.82). This motif is repeated again and again through the books of Joshua, Judges, I and II, Samuel I and II, and Kings I and II (Miles, 1996, p.190).

In this sense, the Bible undercuts the presumptions of earlier myths by promoting a masculine godhead. In *The Hebrew Goddess*, Patai (1990) argues:

*male hegemony from the Biblical prophets, psalmists, moralists, and historians, as well as the sages, scribes, theologians, rabbis, and teachers of the Talmudic period, constantly use the unmitigated anthropomorphisms in referring to God as ‘King’, ‘Lord’, ‘Master of the Universe’, and ‘Our Father in Heaven’ to mention a few expressions (p.29).*

Israel was not alone in the worship of a single male god: Babylon saw the elevation of Marduk to a central position; Egypt saw the advent of single primacy in the god Amon/Ra/Ptah; Christianity elevated Jesus Christ to god status (Coote & Ord, 1991,
The creative role of the Feminine Principle is removed from the Bible as creation is now subject to the spoken word, or *logos*.

**Logos or the Power of the Word – Technology of Creation**

Creation myths are the major building blocks of a tradition, in Raimon Panikkar’s (1979) words “the god of my belief whether being Shiva, Zeus, or any other, is my myth” (p.372). A critical factor regarding human knowledge is myth, however according to Panikkar, myth has been “altered in translation from its original soil by distorting its message and truth” (p.373). As noted in the previous chapter, sacred text has distorted aspects of the Feminine while the palimpsest of patriarchal epistemology has not merely fragmented, but has the fragments erased. In an educational sense, myth is invaluable in the meeting of cultures and the cross fertilization that can result from them (p.98). Despite this fact, Panikkar notes that the “West concedes to an almost schizophrenic split between *mythos* and *logos*, heart and mind, action and contemplation, [hereof] overcoming the subject object dichotomy” (p.79).] Myth is another way of knowing, distilled as human experience, expressed as metaphor, and in this respect does not rely on *logos* which only deals with the observable transitory world (O’Connor, 2000, pp.1-2). Panikkar (1979) suggests it is necessary for a dialogue to occur between cultures, and the mutual fecundation that results from it; first of all, dialogue must be carried out on a mythic level rather than the confrontation between *logoi* (p.99).

In *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Neumann (1970) describes myths as vehicles for the unconscious and the foundation for the study of archetypes (p.xvii). As previously noted, Carl Jung developed the term archetype as “primordial images” which make up structural elements of the “collective unconscious that are inherited” (p.xvii). The evolution of consciousness was a continuing process stretching over thousands of years and as such mythological images are an exemplum for the evolution of consciousness with “the accent lying on the stories, symbols, and various strata for consciousness development both individual and collective” (Newman, 1970, p.xix, Noddings, 1993). In the light of Jung’s theories, and their application to creation
mythology focusing on the Iron Age we find all aspects of the Feminine transformed by the emerging dominant patriarchal paradigm where the male is projected as the stronger, the better, the holier, and the more authentic (O’Murchu, 2013). Instead of the fertile womb of the Mother, the Word of command is central in the act of creation (Coote & Ord, 1991). Coote and Ord note, “naming has profound significance in the old Mesopotamian belief system as the name reveals the essence of the bearer; it also carries magic power” (p.15). The Babylonian god Marduk is endowed with power and renamed, thus receiving fifty names as tokens of his power (p.15). Coote and Ord explain how “the concept [of naming] lives on in Genesis 1, traveling through the millennia appearing as myth and fairy tale” (p.15). Significant changes affecting human consciousness appear in religious tradition, culture and society which is mitigated through the spoken word: the act of naming enters recorded history and becomes immortal (Lerner, 1986a, p.151; Coote & Ord 1991, p.18; Shlain, 1999). In Eve: the History of an Idea, Phillips (1984) contends “The creation language of Genesis is not the language of Nature. It is the language of craftsmanship, or even better, it is a language of technology” (p.12).

God is a craftsman, or potter, who “moulds, shapes, and forms the world and its creatures”, as a craftsman he is not tied to Nature: God “separates” (Phillips, 1984, p.12). Turning our attention to Chapter 1 of Genesis, traditionally called the Priestly account, Phillips states how the text “carries out its masculinising of the relationship between God and his world on another level. God does not even handle his raw material; instead he ‘speaks’ his creation into being. His realm is the realm of the spoken, his Word (p.13).

According to Genesis, the world is not procreated, nor of ‘one substance’ as with the Mother Goddess, but rather created out of nothing, ex nihlo (Phillips, 1984, p.13; Knight & Levine, 1989, p.200). God’s self-contained masculinity guarantees that he will not have a sexual life of any kind, instead his relationship is conceptualised as a covenant between himself and Israel (Isaiah 50:1-8, 62:1-5; Jeremiah 2:2-3, 20-25; 3:1-20, Hosea 1-4, 14) (p.14). Shlain (1999) notes “all the words and metaphors associated with creation: conception, gestation, ingenuity, prolific, seminal, prodigious, genesis, genius, profligate, and produce, evoke sexuality or a women giving birth”, thus Yahweh supplants sexuality with an “act of will encoded in Words” (p.111). The very first
lesson of the revolutionary religion is “when Yahweh commands ‘Let there be...’ concerns the overreaching importance of *logos*” (p.111; Lerner, 1986a; Coote & Ord, 1991; Phillips, 1984).

According to Patai, the masculine godhead is represented by one crucial factor, a linguistic one, which defied all theological repugnance to the attribution of bodily qualities to God (Patai, 1990, p.28). The sacred act of female birthing is in essence subverted by patriarchal technologization, women become little more than created resources for man. Patai contends:

It is in the nature of the Hebrew language that every noun has either a masculine or feminine gender (except a very few which can take either). The two Biblical names of God, *Yahweh* (pronounced out of reverence for its great holiness as ‘Adonai’ and usually translated as ‘the Lord’) and *Elohim* (or briefly *El*, translated as’ God’), are masculine. When a pronoun is used to refer to God, it is the masculine ‘He’; when the verb describes that He did something or when an adjective qualified Him, they appear in masculine form (in Hebrew there are male and female forms of verbs and adjectives). Thus, every verbal statement about God conveyed the idea that He was masculine (Patai, 1990, p.28).

The place and law of the One, the One God, states Denike, “do not exist without the violence of negation, the repudiation of the fertility cults and especially the feminine deities of the ancient world, whose fecund bodies threaten to engulf the ascetically purified, rational soul of man” (Denike, 2003, p.19). In *The Devil’s Insatiable Sex*, Denike (2003) suggests this may explain when Leviticus outlines “all the ways” in which “mans’ souls” are made abominable and unclean, Leviticus prescribes the rituals required to sanctify and purify the children of Israel (Denike, 2003, p.19). In the will-to-purity, a body worthy of the Temple must avoid all whoredom, adultery, female nakedness and the abhorrent (p.19), “foundation of her blood” (Leviticus 20: 9-21).

Love is an interdependent life force, which drives sexuality, and its erotic creativity, long perceived as a source of sin and temptation, emerging now as a key dimension of authentic spirituality (O’Murchu, 2013, p.214). God and humanity however, do not merge in the Bible they stand independent making covenants with each other (Phillips, 1984, p.13). The creative role of the feminine is thus removed from the Bible, since the
birth of humanity is no longer represented as an act of divine union, but of a single affair attributed to God. It is highly significant note Laura and Chalender (2012) that:

"male monotheism shifts the source of life from the primordial Mother Goddess and the immanent womb of Mother Nature to the transcendent father. Where procreation and reproduction were once associated with the uniqueness of women and the fertile fields of Mother Nature, the move to male monotheism usurps the unique privilege of the Goddess, and nature itself, in bringing forth life (p.183)."

It is a male God who creates Nature itself, and thus covertly usurps the nurturing role of the Mother Goddess in the process of creation (p.183). Sexuality has become an act of will defined by ‘Words’.

**Logos and the Law of the One God**

The God of Israel is single, and male, whose will is embodied in Hebrew “Law” (Phillips, 1984, p.11). Research from Young suggests the “Law” books are religions first known tenants of all religious laws being divinely given (Young, 1994, p.xv). In this sense, for the Hebrew peoples, the Ten Commandments encapsulated the Word of God found within the Torah, or the first five books of the Old Testament (Dimont, 1962, p.117; Antonelli, 2004). In her work *An Anthology of Sacred Text by and About Women*, Young (1994) points to the function of law codes as being “highly complex in ways that vary from tradition to tradition; all religious law codes, are at the very least a reference point for their tradition” providing a guide for humans to live by (p.xv). When in doubt the law books are consulted (p.xv). The narrative of the Old Testament reflects a patriarchal culture Phillips (1984) notes, “the concept of god defies sexism by giving religious authenticity to a socio-political system” (p.10). Young and Phillips point to gender specific laws, governed by the law books as being the first step in the process concerning women’s sexuality, and in turn seeks to legitimise women’s subordination (Phillips, 1984, p.11; Young, 1994, p.xv; Norris, 1998; Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Christ & Plaskow, 2016). It is evident that the patriarchal priesthood could not begin, or sustain civilisation until every residue of Feminine religious authority had been mastered and domesticated (Phillips, 1984, p.4; Lerner, 1986a, p.151; Shlain, 1999, p.86, Wright, 2010, Christ & Plaskow, 2016). In this respect, Yahweh is single, devoid
of all aspects of feminine fertility, sexuality and erotic creativity associated with fertility rites is noticeable absent. As Miles (1996) comments in his treaties on *God: a Biography*, the mythology of the Bible undercut the presumption of earlier myths in the analysis between what is human and divine (p.9). The “I” and the “Thou” are replaced by “the first and foremost” epistemology of thought “I think, therefore I am”, cosmogony is secondary, rational thought replaces Nature (p.9).

“In the Beginning was the Word” (John 1:1). Shlain (1999) notes emphasis is on the importance of words, Yahweh forbids the use of only one: His name (p.84). In theory, Yahweh emphasises that naming is the most potent power, naming confers meaning and order: To name is to know; To know is to control (p.84). Yahwah is stripped of all images; Shlain describes how an Israelite could know Him *only* by reading what He had written: the written letter has replaced the graven image (p.84). Monotheism recognises only one God: “Hear O Israel, the Lord is your God, the Lord is one” (Miles, 1996, p.6). The Bible insists on nothing more about God than on his unity (p.6).

**Sacred Text deemed as Male Privilege**

In *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*, Young (1994) argues that one of the consequences of parochial influence within religion is the “allocation and confinement of all positions of prestige within religion is to men” (p.viii). As aforementioned, Eliade (1956) contended that the religious domain of men was judged as “sacred” while the actions of women were seen as being “profane and therefore unimportant” hence clouding the accuracy of the representation of male and female roles within religious text (p.96). In Young’s (1994) opinion “it is not a convincing representation of the human experience, nor does it tell us of religious functions for all human beings” (p.viii). Most of our learning notes Young, comes from human history, this being so, it beggars belief that there is little, or nothing on women in major books whether it be individual dogma, or in comparative studies of religious education (p.viii). Research from Young shows “vast amount of religious text have been written by men, for other men and are considered normative texts of the tradition; they convey an astonishing variety of religious expressions” (p.xi). If we take into account the major belief systems of the West, the ideal religious person is perceived as male that is, the
sage, the priest, the monk, of even greater significance are the primary deities, especially in monotheistic traditions which are all male (p.xi). And this Young concludes, “leaves women with very little social or religious power because no matter how well they fulfil the expectations of their religion they will remain female and therefore excluded” (p.xi). The denial of these positions to women has far-reaching social and spiritual implications given that the Principle, as in Woman and Nature are viewed as inferior under the current paradigm of power, hence we no longer honor the Divine Feminine, Nature, or the mystery and wonder of life. The following passage by Young suggests:

The male dominance of religion is a fairly recent development in the long history of the human race; so in fact is the concept of male divinity. According to recent scholarship, long before men donned sacred attire and began worshiping male gods, women dominated the religious scene as divinities and religious experts (p.xi).

The ancient world, positioned women as priests within the religious conventions of the Ancient Near East, Rome, Greece, together with the tribes of the Celtic world (Young, 1994, p.xi). It is no mistake that the Church held the Virgin Mary in high esteem, but her eternal purity and virginity has been irrefutably damaging to women over the centuries (Lee, 2018b, p.2). In Catholicism Mary remains a virgin throughout her married life, and her eternal virginity has distorted the character of Mary, “turning her into a submissive, dependent creature without threat to patriarchal structures” (p.3). Lee (2018b) notes, evidence gathered from art history depicts Mary as a priestly figure (as in the 11th centurt mosaic from Ravena) with her own autonomy and authority, “where she embodies [as theotokos] the symbolic vocation of all Christians to ‘give birth’ to the transforming presence of Christ” (p.5). The model of maternity for the Catholic Church is the Virgin Mary, Pope Francis (as cited in Lee, 2018b) states Mary, “in the fullness of time conceived through the Holy Spirit and gave birth to the Son of God” (p.6).

If that were the case, then here lies the contradiction, women could be ordained because of their connection to Mary would allow them to do so, like her, as representatives of the church. “If the world received the body of Christ from this women Mary, then women today should not be excluded from giving the body of Christ, as priests, to the faithful at mass” (p.7), (this topic will be explored in a later chapter). It is no coincidence that the Vatican, in the early 20th century, forbade any depiction of Mary
appearing in priestly vestments (p.8). Herefore her representation is to remain as unattainable virgin-mother: never as leader, and never “as a fully embodied women in her own right” (p.8).

Women have always held a sacred function within religion, and yet fear has been super imposed onto women by male primacy at the behest of their own frustrations and failure. Thomas (2009) notes that fear is an unconscious emotion that looks for a scapegoat or victim to bring these forces into action (p.69). A theme that will be fully explored in a later chapter with regard to the ill treatment women surrounding the accusations of witchcraft.

**A Philosophy Without Women**

The work of Songe-Møller, *Philosophy Without Women*, spells out how there is a tendency running through Greek thought regarding the relationship between the sexes, which is most apparent in the works of Hesiod, Plato, and Aristotle (Songe-Møller, 2002, p.xv). The link between the concepts of philosophy, and the history of thought, advanced by the early philosophers in regard of sexual attitudes in particular, had a fundamental impact on the Feminine and her role within creation. As noted in the previous chapter Aristotle, defined the concept of a woman in terms of her gender as defective in comparison to the male. Such works signal the beginning of the tradition that treats the man as “definitive of what it means to be human and the woman as ‘Other’ be it mythology, or philosophy” (Songe-Møller, 2002, p.xv). The philosophy of Parmenides (540-510BCE), (as cited in Songe-Møller, 2001) questioned the Greek notion of “Becoming [as] reality is mutually dependent on language, “on logos” (Songe-Møller, 2001, p.39). As earlier intimated by scholars such as Shlain (1999), Phillips (1984), and Briffault (1969), it is language, “meaning here words, speech or thought that determines what can be considered true, and the interdependence is mutual: in thinking, a person must be thinking of something, meaning something which *is*, something that exists” (Sponge-Møller, 2002, p.39). Moreover this mutual dependence, suggests Songe-Møller “between language and reality is expressed in one of the best known fragments - *For thinking and being are the same*” (p.39). Parmenides (as cited in Sponge-Møller, 2002) established a notion of reality that is “independent of
reproduction, coming-to-be, growth and change, and entrenches the ideal of a one sex world” (p.39). His work had consequential effects on the philosophical development of Plato, who attributed sexual characteristics to various elements of existence; placing them in a hierarchy which saw women and Nature as “inferior things...and aspects of the body become associated with the female, while the positive elements of existence, be it unity, identity, un-changeability and reason are all regarded as male” (p.xvi).

In *The Other Bible: Ancient Alternative Scriptures*, Barnstone (1984) describes Plotinus (CE 205-270), as a follower of Plato and a Neoplatonist, who developed Platonic notions that not only pervaded the texts of early Christian theologians such as Pseudo-Dionysius and Johannes Scotus Erigena, but his work continued to infiltrate, and even dominate thought until the end of the Middle Ages (P. 724). For Plotinus: “The world is in the Idea of God, the Logos, his created Word” (as cited in Briffault, 1969, Vol. 1, p.4).

Plotinus identified “The One” who causes the world, but does not “create the world as a separate entity”, with an independent existence, as in Judaism, Christianity and Islam (as cited in Barnstone, 1984, p.724). Hereof, power is in the “word”, through the creative “word” and through the act of “naming”, by way of which the gods bring forth life (Briffault, 1969, Vol.1, p.4). In *The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions*, Briffault (1969, Vol.1) notes outwardly no “name” signifies non-existence, the “name” therefore is identical to “form” or the “essence of their being” (p.4). In this regard the ancient Babylonians and the Egyptians construed the “name” as the “essence” of personhood (p.4). The Babylonian god Marduk; the Egyptian god Thoth; and the Hebrew god Yahweh are all personifications of a god “who creates by his voice through an act of will” (p.4). The fundamental point is the method in which the “Creator God” now brings the world into existence - just by the utterance of his “word” (p.4): “And God said Let there be light” (Genesis1:3).

In *The Evolution of God*, Wright (2010) notes Xenophanes, a 6th century BCE philosopher, may have been the first monotheist in writing of god, as “always he remains in the same place, moving not at all...without toil he shapes all things by the thought in his mind. All of him sees, all thinks, and all hears” (Kirk, 1970, p.183).

Bodnar and Zalta (2016) note the Nature of God as “the unmoved mover of the universe a super entity who initiated the first movement with the universe set at the beginning of
time” (p.2). Various scholars argue it was Philo, “who shaped Judaism around a Grecian metaphysical framework so thoroughly, that it influenced both Jews and Christians in the creation of their new theologies” (Kirk, 1970, p.188; MacCulloch, 2014; Dimont, 1962). Wright (2010) notes, “he put Greek clothing on Jewish revelation...God did not influence the world directly, but indirectly, through Logos, that is, through the Word” (Wright, 2010, p.188). Philo skipped over the darker sides of the Bible by not acknowledging the violence, or killing, relying on allegory and the philosophy of Plato to conceptualise God (Dimont, 1962, p.117). The unity of existence can only be comprehended by thought, which becomes associated with man and the masculine, denying all understanding of the Feminine.

The Unknowability of God

The god of Israel draws attention to the importance of “words” by forbidding the use of only one: “His name...naming is the most potent power...naming confers meaning and order: To name is to know. To know is to control” (Shlain, 1999, p.84). In this sense, Arthur writes, “knowledge of God’s name was believed to give one power to invoke his presence (usually for the purpose of using the divine power for one’s ends), even to see him as an objective physical entity” (Arthur, 2016, p.71). The God of Israel was so powerful, however, that this would prove fatal for a mere mortal, hence the warnings given to Moses: “Thou canst not see my face; for there shall be no man see me and live” (Exodus, 33:20).

This argument can be observed in Arthur’s (2016) Pseudo-Dionysius as Polemicist, noting that Dionysius goes still further:

Not even the angels may know his name, which is a name above every other name and is therefore no name. There is for the Jew a definite fear associated with attempts to name God or to define him too precisely. The name of God is holy and terrible. Many Orthodox Jews today write ‘G-d’ instead of ‘God’ and refer to him as Ha Shem (The Name) instead of ‘God’. Dionysius is closer to the Jew than the Greek when he says ‘We must not dare to resort to words or conceptions concerning that hidden divinity which transcends being, apart from what the sacred scriptures have divinely revealed (p.24).
The Old Testament conception of God is a single male transcendent ‘Other’ who stands remote from his people, even to visualise him is a sin. Divine power is in his name, inasmuch as the god of Israel controls by instilling fear into those who worship him.

**Removal of the Fecund Mother**

In *Silence: a Christian History*, MacCulloch notes “stripped of all images” the only access and knowledge of God was by “reading what He had written” (MacCulloch, 2014, p.17). God is omniscient, and omnipotent who day by day brings the world into existence by a repeated command, “at his first creation of sentient life he adds words of blessing to the words of command” (p.17). After his creation, like any other ruler on earth, he is judge and commander (p.17). Essentially, for the first time in history the written word replaces the “graven image” (Campbell, cited in Dutton, 1985, p.53; Shlain, 1999, p.86; Eliade, 1978, p.181). As noted in a previous chapter, Campbell suggests the first representation of a “graven image” is the female figurines from the Palaeolithic era (Campbell, cited in Dutton, 1985, p.53). Removal of the feminine image from the godhead must have caused anguish to the early Hebrew women, placing further impetus on Goddess worship. Patai notes, there “may have been the belief that she promoted fertility in women and facilitated childbirth” (Patai, 1990, p.39; Norris, 1998). Norris (1998) notes in her work, *The Story of Eve*:

*What is striking about the cult of Yahweh is the lack of imaginative space it offered to women. On the one hand, the family unit and frequent childbearing were heavily promoted, but, at the same time, the benign goddesses who cared for the female reproductive cycle and for children were suppressed as inimical to the one-God ideal of priesthood. The effect was to deny women the comfort which these goddesses offered, but had no parallels in Yahwist ritual (p.13).*

Warfare, infant mortality, and disease would have brought pressure on women to have large families (p.17). Palestinian burial sites suggest a high mortality rate for children and adolescence. Norris notes, “childbirth itself was risky both for mother and baby, its pains and fears are a persistent theme in the Bible” (p.17). Hazardous childbirth was a divine command: “I will intensify the pangs of your childbearing; in pain shall you bring forth children” (Genesis 3:16).
In this sense, the argument set forth depicts the Old Testament as being a powerful social instrument, written for a point of view, celebrating the political manifesto for one god, herefore ensuing the realignment of the early Hebrew culture, the losers being all things pertaining to the Feminine: Goddesses, women, images, beauty, Nature, wholeness, tolerance, and intuition (Shlain, 1999, p.86; Eliade, 1978, p.181). Stone (1976) describes the world of Saint Paul as patriarchal and monotheistic, he was aware of female deities of whose influence he had long experience (Stone, 1976, p.210). God was imagined male the obvious foe of the Church in its early ecumenical struggles was the cult of Isis and her temple companions (pp.210-211). Stone quotes a revealing line in the destruction of the Goddess religion ascribed to Clement of Alexandria in his reproduction of a saying from the Gospel according to the Egyptians, directed at the current worship of Isis “I have come to destroy the works of the female” (p.211). In The Myth of the Goddess an Evolution of an Image, Baring and Cashford (1991) note Constantine determined the fabric of the Bible to match the political structure of the Roman Empire (p.634). Constantine brought an end to the ancient sanctuary of Ashtoreth/Asarte at Aphaca, claiming “that it was immoral” (Stone, 1976, p.211). Around 380CE the Emperor Theodosius closed down the temple of Artemis/Diana at Ephesus in Western Anatolia, also the temples of the Goddess in Rome and Eleusis: “it was said that he despised the religion of women” (p.211). Eisler (1988) notes that probably as late as the year 200, virtually all the feminine imagery for God had disappeared from orthodox tradition (Eisler, 1988, p.132), allowing room for power-based patriarchal values, representation, and only one all controlling male God. In due course the Church Fathers promoted a paradigm of power through sexist, misogynistic, anti-female propaganda repressing all Feminine symbols of the divine in both a secular and religious contexts. The nature of women is expressed from a parochial perspective regarding women as “sexual volcanoes always on the brink of eruption” and in need of careful containment if the social, that is “male, status quo is to be maintained” (Norris, 1998, p.65). In this sense, women are being further marginalised at the expense of male cerebral spirituality as there is nothing to offer women succour in the new patriarchal male-centred religion.
Wisdom as Goddess of Creation

Long (1992) *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions: the Search for the Female in Deity*, contends the Bible is at the forefront of gender politics, it is through androcentric bias that the female deity has long been obscured in the patriarchal traditions of Judaism and Christianity (p.6). Even so, the notion of the Feminine did not disappear completely from the masculine psyche, reappearing in later philosophies as Lady Wisdom (to be discussed in detail in a later chapter). Wright (2010) notes that Philo equates the Logos with wisdom, often using the terms interchangeably. In Proverbs, “Wisdom” is depicted as a woman: “Happy are those who find wisdom” for “her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold”. Indeed, “nothing you desire can compare with her...her ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy” (Kirk, 1970, p.224).

In short a woman worth pursuing. In *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* Johnson notes, there is a dire need for new female imagery and metaphors, in this sense the figure of Wisdom is accorded the role, while enjoying a close relationship with God. She protects her own and helps them to the knowledge of God; she is like a redeemer who grants immortality (Johnson, 1994, p.57). According to Wright (2010) “Wisdom was probably once considered as a goddess, possibly Yaweh’s daughter” (p.224). However, Johnson (1994) research differs markedly from Wright arguing that the female imagery of Sophia, as Wisdom, was once was God’s wife (Johnson, 1994, p.57). Long (1992) and Ruether (2005) note that the Wisdom Literature, and also the Wisdom Tradition draw on the feminine motifs appropriated by the Goddess traditions (Long, 1992; Ruether, 1989, 2005). Devlin-Glass (2001) and Matthews (2002), connect the Celtic Sovereignty goddesses with Wisdom/Sophia, who consorts with kings as the creative and wisdom-bestowing mystic woman appearing in the form of either an ‘angelic or other-world’ presence or as an earthly woman (Devlin-Glass, 2001; Matthews, 2002).

In a hymn inspired by Proverbs, Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) French theologian and scientist wrote these words on the Divine Feminine

> When the world was born, I came into being,
Before the centuries were made,

I issued from the hand of God…

I am the beauty running through the world,

To make it associate in ordered groups:

The ideal held up before the world

To make it ascend.

I am the essential Feminine (de Chardin cited in Matthews, 2002, p.325).

In the inter-testamental Book of Solomon, Long describes how “a fully divine female is the alter ego of God” she is also identified with Nature, “whose secrets she knows and will share with humanity” (Long, 1992, p.6). In other words “it is through Wisdom that God created the world” because she is a “pre-requisite of creation” (p.25). The important fact being, “Wisdom is a separate and distinct being, not simply as an attribute or function of Yahweh” (p.31). Long continues, “[Wisdom] is subsumed by patriarchy becoming law in the first five books of the Bible” (p.31). Most religions value Wisdom, whether understood as practical knowledge of the right way to live or esoteric knowledge of the secret workings of the universe (Young, 1994, p.xxii). Hereof, it is acutely evident that Lady Wisdom has been negated and forgotten as the heavens are “created forthwith by God” (Long, 1992, p.31).

In The Wisdom Goddess, Arthur’s (1984) study explains how the Egyptian Goddess Isis is said to have “embraced within herself all of the ancient deities”, over centuries of folklore, “the Isis aetiologies had become almost completely assimilated into Greek culture and Jewish mysticism” (p.158). The Greek biographer Plutarch (as cited in Richter, 2001) developed his middle-Platonic metaphysics interpreting the tradition of Isis by way of allegory “in an effort to renegotiate the traditional, derivative status of Greek cult” (p.2; Knapp, 1997, p.20). The De Iside et Ostride (Isis and Osiris), is a deep and explicitly philosophical text by Plutarch which offers some of the most sophisticated formulations of middle-Platonic metaphysics that has come down to us (as cited in Richter, 2001 p.1). Written late in life, Richter (2001) explains why Plutarch chose ostensibly the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris as the vehicle for his most mature
and developed thoughts on the divine and the structure of the universe (p.1). Plutarch defines Isis as “I am all that has been and is and will be; and no mortal has ever lifted my mantle:” (as cited in Knapp, 1997, p.20). Knapp (1997) notes in Women in Myth, it is Isis who integrates “Flesh, Spirit and Logos”, unlike androcentric metaphysics spirit, flesh, and logos are not antagonistic (p.20). Isis is a woman who uses reason (logos) to cope with the rigors of her earthly and divine experience (p.20). Knapp demonstrates how Isis yearned to acquire greater insight and power, not for herself exclusively, but to help the collective resolve its ills (p.19). The goddess does not suffer any humiliation or sinfulness in regard to the sexuality and well being of her body because spirit, flesh, and logos cohabit in harmony within her psyche, there is no need for flagellation, asceticism, or depreciation of the body. Equally significant is the fact that Isis through her power and wisdom is able to resurrect Osiris (p.xx). Ruether (2005) notes, Isis knew all the secrets of the universe which she passes on to her healed son Horus, conceived “through her power to revive the phallus of the dead Osiris, Horus suckled on her lap, the seat of power” (p.69). These evocative symbols make dramatically clear the “Near Eastern supposition that while men ruled as kings and lords, it was the power of the goddesses that put them on their thrones” (p.69). This understanding of Isis provides a counterpoint to the prevailing images and understanding of wisdom.

The Metaphysics of ‘I Am’ or the One in the Many

Scholars have defined characteristics that have been associated with Yahweh and his primacy over all other gods and goddesses. Eliade (1978) notes, “Yahweh is conceived as exclusively anthropomorphic, but he also has recourse to cosmic epiphanies, for the world was his creation” (p.181). He is a God who speaks, expressing himself in noise, usually emphatic noise (MacCulloch, 2014, p.16; Shlain, 1999). Another anthropomorphic characteristic is he demands absolute obedience from his worshipers, like a despot (Eliade, 1978, p.181). The most significant feature is that Yahweh remains alone (p.181), he does not share his power. What is new and most impressive is the expression of a deity who stands as “absolutely different from his creation, ‘the utterly other’ (the ganz andere of Rudolph Otto)” (Eliade, 1978, p.182). Combine intolerance, and fanaticism, all of which are characterised by the prophets, seers and missionaries of
the three great monotheisms, and “you have the model and justification in Yahweh’s example” (Eliade, 1978, p.181; Whitmont, 1987, p.81). Whitmont adds parochialism, intolerance, and fanaticism all of which are “the shadow aspects of mental and ego brilliance” (p.81).

\[
I \text{ am the Lord thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is heaven above, or that is earth beneath or that is the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I thy God am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their fathers wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:2-7).}
\]

Whitmont (1987) draws further attention to the opening statement of the Decalogue, “I am”, arguing that this declaration needs to be seen more than just a grammatical phrase (p.81). From the very outset, it expresses the nature and quality of the entity that addresses itself to Israel (p.81). The god who speaks identifies himself as “I am”. It is evident, argues Whitmont, that: “this fact becomes clear in Exodus 3:14 when, in reply to Moses’ request for his name, he responds: ‘eyeh asher eyeh’ literally “I am that which I am” in other words existence which is consciousness of itself as an I. Here the root experience of selfness erupts into consciousness, bringing with it, as well, the decrees “Thou shalt’ and ‘Thou shalt not’” (p.81).

Friedrich Engels (1820-95), as cited in The World’s Religions: Understanding Living Faiths (Clarke, 1993), developed a theory of religion now called “projectionist” (p.9). Engels argued “God was a creation of the human mind, a figment of the imagination, people simply projected on to this ‘illusion’, human qualities such as compassion that they regarded as ideal” (p.9). Dimont (1962) posited the same question when determining the proof of God’s existence (p.30). In The Jews and History, Dimont (1962) asks did the covenant between Abraham and God actually happen or was it all in Abraham’s mind (p.30). From a psychoanalytical perspective, Dimont suggests “Abraham could of himself conceived the idea of a covenant with an Almighty Father figure, represented as Jehovah, and projected onto this father figure his own wish to safeguard his children and his children’s children for future generations” (p.30). According to Dimont, views vary considerably, sceptics totally reject all forms of
religion, while fundamentalists take the literal interpretation of every word as truth (p.30).

What needs to be recognised is the fact that all religions have blood on their hands (Compte-Sponville, 2008, p.13). Compte-Sponville contends, religion claims to “bind people together” while history has proven just the opposite (p.13). What incites people to massacre is not faith; it is fanaticism, whether religious or political (p.76). Love and truth, respect and trust, are Feminine values that bring us together. As O’Murchu opines (2013): “Love is an interdependent life force, a spectrum of possibility, ranging from it ultimate divine grandeur to its particularity in subatomic interaction. It is the origin and goal of our search for meaning” (p.14).

When we turn our focus to Celtic traditions we find that there has been no preserved native story of the creation of the world, or the creation of man (Rees & Rees, 1961, p.95). Rees and Rees point out in Celtic Heritage, how the Lebor Gabála Érenn, or ‘The Book of the Taking of Ireland’, is undoubtedly a laborious attempt to combine parts of native teaching with Biblical history, Hebrew mythology, and over time layered with medieval romance, and legend, (p.95). According to O’Connor (2000), “the world of Irish mythology is complex and devoid of linearity and order that is to be found in Greek mythology (p.viii). In Beyond the Mist, O’Connor describes how Irish mythology is dominated by the archetypal feminine, who is both the creator of the land, and the land itself: “In this sense she underlines the central motif in Irish mythology on the cycle of life, death, and renewal [birth]. She is both hag and beauty, mother and virgin, benevolent and destructive, bearing many names amongst which are Anu, Danu, or sometimes that of the Cailleach Bhëarra” (p.20).

Let us be very clear here, it is the primal Feminine energy within Celtic myth which informs and shapes the gods and heroes of the stories, manifesting out of a sense of connected and interconnectedness, not Logos and separation (O’Connor, 2000, p.11; Devlin-Glass, 2001). It has been found, suggests Rees and Rees (1989), while still in a state of semi-barbarism this doctrine of the Celts “saw with some of the greatest ancient and modern philosophers, the One in the Many, and the single Essence in all the manifold forms of life” (p. 99). O’Connor (2000) points to the fact that Celtic mythology remained under an oral tradition for a much longer time than either Greek, or Roman mythology (p.11). If we consider the spoken word, as a means of oral
communication for emotion, and feelings that engage the senses, by allowing the imagination to flow, in stark contrast to the masculine principled ideal of writing which brought forth linearity and logic, abstract ideas and order (p.11). The Celtic bards and druids had access to writing, they simply chose not to. O’Connor specifies written language did not arrive in Ireland before the 6th century CE almost a thousand years later than Greece and Rome (p.3). In contrast, feminist theologian L. Percovich claims Irish authors translating the Old Testament:

*demonised the ancient forms of belief, systematically erasing* the memories of the ancient wisdom. What remains is mingled, often radically changed or at least filtered through the vision and the prejudices of Christian authors, such as the monks of Ireland in the seventh and eighth century CE, who recorded ancient lore, but purified it from dangerous woman-centred myths (Percovich, 2004, p.32).

Let us be very clear here, if it were not for the Irish monks we would not have any access to Celtic mythology, where the male figure may be central to the story, it is the women who stand out. If Percovich had chosen to consult the works of the Venerable Bede (Shirley-Price, trans. 1968, II. 13), she would have discovered many of the Christian monks were druids before taking holy orders, therefore would have been acutely aware of their heritage.

The pseudo-history of the taking of Ireland, as set out in *Lebor Gabála*, culminates with the son’s of Mil successful invasion of Ireland (Rees & Rees, 1961, p.96). Amhairghin, poet, judge and druid encounters three goddesses, Banba, Fotla, and Ériu, each of whom extracted from Amhairghin the promise that her name should be the name for the island now and forever (p.96). Research from Patricia Monaghan (2003) stipulates “a poet’s words are sacred and can never be reversed” (p.21). Contrary from other mythologies, Ireland was founded and named after the Feminine, the island represents an ‘imago mundi’ rising from the waters of chaos, or as Eliade (1978) suggests a “cosmological image” (p.39), thus symbolising the sacred precinct of the Goddess.

It is Amhairghin states Rees and Rees (1961), who pronounced the first judgment in Ireland as three significant poems are accredited to him (p.99). The first is his famous and extraordinary incantation to Ireland in which he subsumes everything into his own being becoming the “One in the Many within the One” (p.99). O’Donohue (1999) notes
“on an ocean of non-existence” the poet Amhaighin embodies the primeval unity of all things (p.155; he has the power to bring a new world into being, taking into account that all his poems demonstrates the nature of creation through incantation (Markale, 1999, p.234; Rees & Rees, 1961; Matthews, C. & J., 1999):

\[ I \text{ am the wind on the sea;} \ I \text{ am a wave of the ocean;} \ I \text{ am the roar of the sea;} \ I \text{ am an ox of seven exiles;} \ I \text{ am a hawk on a cliff;} \ I \text{ am a tear of the sun;} \ I \text{ am a turning maze;} \ I \text{ am a boar in valour;} \ I \text{ am a salmon in a pool;} \ I \text{ am a dispensing power;} \ I \text{ am a lake on a plain;} \ I \text{ am a dispensing power;} \ I \text{ am a spirit of skilful gift;} \ I \text{ am a grass-blade giving decay to the earth;} \ I \text{ am a creative god giving inspiration;} \ I \text{ Who else clears the stones on the mountain? Who is it who declares the sun’s arising? Who is it who tells where the sun sets? Who brings cattle from the house of Tethra? Upon whom do the cattle of Tethra smile? Who is this ox? Who is the weaving god who mends the thatch wounds? The incantation of a spear? The incantation of the wind? (Rees & Rees, 1961, p.99) \]

Here we find no dualism, no irrational puppet master, no loud noises or jealousy, no threats of violence or annihilation as we have seen in previous mythologies associated with Western traditions. The point of the premise clarifies the “I Am” principle as being multi-dimensional, interconnected, and expressed through song, here, Amhairghin “causes what [is] to be”, thus unifying all of nature and the cosmos. For Amhairghin, proffers O’Donohue (1999), “I am because everything else is, I am in everything and everything is in me” (p.128). Within such metaphors, suggests Rees and Rees (1989), we may see the working of the holographic principle “the whole embodied within the many” (p.242). The whole is understood to be contained in, but not by, each part, and concludes O’Murchu (2013), “the dilemma of pantheism is resolved” (p.210). In the following centuries Celtic monks similarly claimed the land (Campbell, 1991, p.110; MacCulloch, 2014, p.43), only this time it was promoting the masculine centred philosophies of the new faith. It can be seen that Celtic mythology provides a counter example to the negative traditions of the Old Testament. Creation occurs through being and becoming, not through the demands of a despot.
God ‘I Am’ Unity or Division:

People can look at holy texts and see what they want to see, what meets their psychological, social, political needs. In his book *The Evolution of God*, Wright (2010) points out how you can conveniently forget part of your scriptural heritage. It could be argued that anthropocentrism undermined men from the very beginning in the sense that the patriarchal culture promulgated killing: Cain killed his brother Abel; Abraham is covertly manipulated into killing his son to prove that his fear of reprisal is far greater than the love for his son (Waugh, 2002, p.174). During the Crusades, when Christians slaughtered the infidel, they were very aware of God’s sanctioning faith-based mass murder in parts of the Bible – whole generations of American Christians are weaned on “a misleading sunny selection of Bible stories” (Kirk, 1970, p.192).

If we consider the power of “I” in relationship to an unconscious world, Erbe (1991) describes how mankind as a whole has entered the era of spiritual awakening (Erbe, 1991, p.6). Pockets within humanity are asking questions, and searching for answers: Who am I? What am I here for? What is the meaning of it all? Peter Erbe (1991) in *God I Am: From Tragic to Magic*, suggests there are those of us who have felt uneasy, or have simply had a “gut full” of man’s old ways, “there is no single path that leads to the Oneness of all Life. Each soul has to walk its own path, all roads lead to the same homeland” p.6). Erbe contends that there is but one question to be asked: *Who am I?* He then explains how ancient wisdom tells us: “Know thyself and Thou shalt be master of the Universe, Self Knowledge is a state of consciousness the Mystics tried to acquaint humanity with through the ages, a consciousness that transcends worldly experience – a state of Being that knows only joy not Fear” (p.5).

It is fear that is the illusory veil separating us from our “Divine Source, the God I Am”, Erbe (1991) suggests that in order to release fear, we must first realise its true nature and cause (p.11). It is clear that the West has an underlying fear of *never enough*, (my italics) to point this out is generally met with resentment (p.1). Man’s “Holy Shrine” to materialism is representative of a spiritual and ecological wasteland; to empty this shrine of its contents suggests Erbe, “is almost perceived as an act of blasphemy” (p.50). We destroy and pollute the world we live in at the expense of our soul, materialism and hectic lifestyles separate us from our Divine Self (p.50). Self identity as
a value of personhood is lost, “Being is a whole man, a healed Self, is a whole Self” (p.3). We look to external sources for happiness and fulfilment rather than looking inward. There is an urgent need to shift from an epistemology of fear to an epistemology of empathy and love, the choice is ours. Erbe notes, Churches with their dogma and governments do not have the answers, in fact “they are the cause of the problem” (p.3). O’Murchu (2013) opines, humans are innately spiritual (p.212), but somewhere along the way we have lost a sacred wisdom that would enable, and empower us to engage with life with grace and creativity, we have lost the Feminine face of God. Man’s constant fear of the Feminine has led to a wealth of spiritual trauma. As noted earlier, Celtic mythology balanced both male and female energies, their union was one of reciprocity. We imagine ourselves as separate while in truth there is only One Being, one God, both male and female, I am you and you are me. We must learn to honour the divine within each other thus ending the need for the “I”. Arguably, by changing ourselves we change the world – we are all connected - by healing ourselves we heal the world (Erbe, 1991, p.222).

**Conclusion**

Our central concern of this chapter has been to tease out the implications put forward by the Hebrew patriarchs postulating a male patriarchal creator who brings forth all of creation through the spoken word, or *logos*. The creation account in the Book of Genesis depicts a story of craftsmanship: he structures, and moulds his world, while forming all of its creatures. Creation occurred without any form of sexuality, in this context the removal of the Feminine and her role within creation has been systematically removed by the authors of Genesis. The birth of humanity is no longer an act of divine union but a single affair attributed to God. The positive characteristics of patristic scholarship are promulgated by philosophers and clerics alike, espousing the male as human and perfect, and woman as ‘Other’. Writers of the Old Testament demonised the ancient forms of belief, systematically erasing the memories of the Feminine Principle conceptualised as ancient wisdom. The following chapter outlines the story of Eve, as she is synonymous with all women her characteristics are assumed in the case of all the women who follow her. It is the metamorphosis of her myth which
has far reaching implications for the expiration of the Feminine Principle that will be argued.
Chapter 4: Genesis - Eve: the Metamorphoses of a Myth

“...When Eve was still in Adam, death did not exist. When she was separated from him, death came into being. If he again becomes complete and attains his former self, death will be no more...”  ([The Gospel of Phillip](#) as cited in Arthur, 1984).

Introduction

Mythic images govern culture, and yet what do they say about our own culture? What is the story of Genesis telling us? The creation myth of any culture has a profound effect on the social mores, and its political systems. The Bible and its stories of humankind have shaped us all, religious, and non-religious alike (Coates, 2009, p.6). Coates writes in his work *Original Sinners*, how some of the stories have affected us “in greater measure than we think, their moral, ethical, and spiritual DNA are embedded in the foundations of our civilisation, in our awareness of who we are as a people and as individuals, our best and worst selves” (p.6). Myths and legends are repositories for the knowledge of life, conveying psychological truths, and perennial wisdom that points beyond history to what is timeless in human existence. Our current Western culture has abandoned the deeper elements of the Feminine that exist across all of life. In this sense the Biblical creation story, found within the text of Genesis, has had a major impact on the three main religious traditions, that is, Judaism, Christianity and Islam as their primary means for revealing, and defining, basic attitudes and values: those particularly concerning women. Previous chapters have explored how our world has become a sterile wasteland because some fertilising spirit has been withdrawn. The state of the world is in crisis. Why? Politics and religion have led the world into a spiritual vacuum as there is no longer any image of the Feminine Principle as sacred or divine. Western civilisation represents man’s nature rather than woman’s; the Great Mother as the web of life (worshiped for thousands of years) is taken over by a patriarchal religion which preaches that God is a single, uncreated, evolved, non-biological entity who reproduces by Word alone. The problem of creation however, is that the female is still needed for
the creation of new life. Given the Great Goddess, “Mother of all living” is a powerful symbol that must be subdued; the difficulty is resolved within the Genesis creation myth when Yahweh created Adam and Eve putting Eve and woman firmly in her place after two males. This form of gender elitism is and its treatment of women is in Laura and Chalender’s words “patriarchal theism” which has institutionalised, and legitimised covertly, power over women (Laura & Chalender, 2012, p.175). Since Eve is synonymous with all women, her characteristics are assumed and defined for all the women that follow her down through the millennia. In this context the Bible becomes synonymous with men’s Word; Elaine Pagels (1979) notes in her treaties on the *Gnostic Gospels*, how the text is modified to suit a male agenda, “probably as late as the year 200 virtually all of the feminine imagery for God had disappeared from orthodox Christian tradition” (p.78), albeit affecting more than half the world’s population.

**The Bible and Male Exegesis**

Writing in the early 1970s, theologian Phyllis Trible (1973c) drew attention to the interaction of some individuals within the Women’s Liberation Movement in relation to the interpretation of Hebrew Scriptures noting the Bible and the Women’s Movement are enemies (p.30). Trible in *Departriachalising in Biblical Interpretation* analyses the arguments set forth by Kate Millet and Mary Daly: *Patriarchy has God on its side*, declares Kate Millet (as cited in Trible, 1973c), introducing her sexually-orientated discussion on the mythology surrounding the ‘Fall’ of Adam and Eve (p.30). Millet maintains the myth is “designed expressly in order to blame the world’s discomfort on the female”. Mary Daly (as cited in Trible, 1973c) expresses a similar argument by stating, “the malignant view of the man-woman relationship which the andocentric myth itself inadvertently reveals and perpetuates” (p.30). Fiorenza adds her voice to the above argument by noting that women are set apart from men because of “creational difference (Fiorenza, 1985, p.7). However, Trible (1973c) proposes an alternative argument to Millet, Daly, and Fiorenza by arguing “the intentionality of biblical faith, as distinguished from a general description of biblical religion, is neither to create or perpetuate patriarchy but rather to function as salvation for both men and women” (p.30). Nonetheless, there is a great deal of evidence to dispute Trible’s perspective. As
noted in previous chapters the law codes of Israel treated women as mere chattels, Hebrew Scripture describes her as a piece of property as found in Exodus, 20, 21; Genesis 3:16 describes Adam’s role as Eve’s master, “thy desire shall be for thy husband, and he shall rule over thee”, while Paul considers women subordinate to their husbands; 1 Timothy makes women responsible for sin in the world (1 Timothy 2:13-15). Considerable evidence affirms the Bible as a document of male supremacy. Woman is not made in the image of God: her only function is to be the male’s “helpmeet”, not an independent person. She is to bring him pleasure, relieve his need for sex, to be subservient, obedient and aware of her second-class status (Spong, 2005, pp.75, p.78). Moving forward in time Frankenbery (2018) in Feminist Philosophy of Religion, provides a similar argument with the aim of critiquing, redefining, or reconstructing the entire field of religious traditions, scripture and practices in the light of gender studies (p.1). In this sense argue Frankenberry:

*Gender constitutes perhaps the most fundamental factor in creating human difference, and it remains among the most ignored in philosophy...philosophy of religion not only originated in a male tradition of production and transmission, with a history of excluding and devaluing women, but it was also defined by many concepts and symbols marked as ‘masculine’, which stood in oppositional relation to those marked ‘feminine’* (p.2).

In their words “Not one of the religions of the world has been totally affirming of woman’s personhood” (p.3). Laura and Buchanan (2012) note women in the Old Testament were used as resource purely for “man’s domination” (p.169), thereby stripping all aspects of woman’s personhood. On this topic, all sacred literatures of the world display an unvarying ambivalence on the subject of women, and “it has been a particularly effective way of undergirding and sanctifying gender hierarchy in the West” (Frankenberry, 2018, p.3). Devlin-Glass and McCreddon (2001), also Fiorenza (1985) note, the future of feminist spiritualities involve a recreating and rewriting of Biblical stories, patriarchal prayers, liturgy and rituals which celebrate our foremothers, we rediscover in story, poetry and song new images, symbols in which feminist liturgies seek to transform patriarchal structures (Fiorenza, 1985, p.14; Devlin-Glass & McCredden, 2001, pp.3-20).
It was evident to Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1895) that, “history shows that the moral degradation of women is due to theological superstitions than to all the other influences together” (p.2). Spong (2005), *The Sins of Scripture*, contends there is something in the human psyche that fuels “anti-female bias”. He then explains how there is something buried deep within the male psyche attributing the feminine with “prejudice and fear”, and, since it is a “primal threat” towards women it needs to be addressed (p.71).

**The Technology of Creation**

It is worth noting that the term technology is broad, and everyone has their own way of understanding its meaning. Technology comes from two Greek words translated into *techne* and *logos*: as argued in the previous chapter *logos* is associated with the word, thought or knowledge, in the Western world the particular form of knowledge in an educational sense, is “value-laden” which we as a culture place on power and control (Laura & Cotton, 1999, p.2). Our fanatical commitment to the educational technologisation of our world has resulted in the depersonalisation of human activity, the depersonalisation of human relations, and the desactification of nature (p.48). The process by way of which technology achieves this measure of control depends upon what Laura and Cotton refer to as *transformative subjugation* (p.48). The technology of power is designed to control (pp.5-39), from the outset the argument set forth is to demonstrate how women have been moulded, manipulated, and subjugated to suit patriarchy’s lust for power; the term technology in this instance is to demonstrate how the institutionalisation of male dominance over both human and natural worlds, has affected gender relations and brought changes to religious beliefs and symbols. We have lost the Feminine intuitive parts of ourselves through patriarchies lust for power. The new paradigm of consciousness expressed here as a conflict between goddess and god can be traced through the Iron Age to our own culture, here mythology and history meet in the narratives of the monarchs Etana, and Gilgamesh.

Kirk (1970) in *Myth: Its Meaning and its Function in Ancient & Other Cultures*, describes how Etana (3,000 BC) is “the first post-deluvian ruler of Kish/Urak in recorded history according to the Sumerian king list” (p.125). Gilgamesh (around 2,600 BC) is the ruler of the city of Uruk (the Biblical Erekh), Jacobson (1976) identifies
Gilgamesh as an ancestor to the kings of the Third Dynasty of Urak (p.195). The stories of Etana and Gilgamesh are closely related as they are representative of the transition of Goddess religion, from the Neolithic Stone Age to that of the god beginning with the Bronze Age, allegorical myth becomes recorded history (Baring & Cashford, 1991). The matter in question being Etana and Gilgamesh yearn to possess, and appropriate the Goddess’s secret of fertility, and immortality, but fail in their quest (Kirk, 1970, p.218). The diminution of the divine feminine is well illustrated by the Greek poet Hesiod. In Hesiod’s Theogony, Zeus establishes his successful kingship by symbolically subsuming all the attributes of the Feminine Principle within himself (ie. wisdom, intuition, love, wholeness) while remaining uniquely male (Detienne & Vernant, 1978, p.107). Detienne and Vernant (1978) identify the rape, and incorporation of the pregnant Metis within his own body, and the subsequent marriage to his second wife Themis, equip Zeus with the powers of both goddesses (p.107). The authors demonstrate that the two goddesses are oracular deities, occupy relationships with the primordial cosmic realities of earth and water; possess powers, and knowledge that encompass the entire cycle of time existing long before the birth and reign of Zeus (p.107). It is Hesiod who informs us of the parthenogenic birth of Athena, Goddess of Wisdom and War from Zeus’ head; the subsequent outcome of this unnatural birth, represents an interruption to the normal procreative relationship between male, and female, with the male god’s assumption of female potency (Peradotto & Sullivan, 1984, p.48; Warner, 1996, p.74; Caldwell, 1987, p.79; Christ, 2020, p.4).

Within the narratives of Hesiod’s Theogony and Works and Days is the story of Pandora, the so-called foolish wife of the Titan Epimethius, who is blamed for humanities misery by releasing the lid of her jar. Jane Harrison (as cited in Thomas, 2000) connects the ritual act of opening the pithoi, or earthen jar, with Pandora and Hermes Psychopompos, her true image is not as a bringer of evil, but rather as a conductor, together with Hermes, guiding the soul’s migration through life (Thomas, 2000, p.70). Pandora is fashioned as a beautiful punishment for men by Zeus, in the wake of Prometheus’ theft of fire (West, 1988, p.29). Graves, in his work on Greek Myths, describes how Pandora wears the epithet of “All Gifts”, once the title of the Great Mother, (Thomas, 2000, p.70; Graves, 1999), except in his Works and Days Hesiod turns her into a “kalôn kakón”, a “beautiful evil” (Graves, 1999, p.15, Norris, 1998, p.115). Pandora’s figure as an immortal Earth Goddess is diminished, her image
is transferred into a beautiful mortal woman who brings evil, and disease upon the world (Thomas, 2000, p.6). Not only does the story give the world a recorded history of a female scapegoat like Eve, but Hesiod sets the stage for a cultural environment that has been taken up by the Western world, in its acceptance of the inferiority of women, while negating the Feminine Principle’s qualities of the soul that nurtures, loves, and feels compassion (p.6).

Mythology becomes history in the Biblical creation stories of Genesis1:1-2. Price and Kearns (2003) note the Old Testament, and Hesiod’s *Theogony*, were written at approximately the same time: around 700BC (p.259). Within this social framework, a patriarchal agenda is established forsaking the traditions of instinct and connectivity, consequently, replacing these concepts with a philosophy of reason and control. Women are now shaped, and manufactured outside of the feminine maternal womb by men, for men, with dire consequences. Research from Reik (1960), *The Creation of Woman*, notes that Genesis contains two creation stories, written by two different authors, one is the creation of Lilith, while the other represents the creation of Adam and Eve (p.28). In the first story God created both male and female in “his image and likeness and he called their name Adam” (p.28). The first account affirms that woman is made in the image and likeness of God, and not as the second story implies, born as an afterthought from Adam’s rib (Riek, 1960, p.28; Knight & Levine, 1989, p.298).

Knight and Levine suggest that the name Lilith derives from an Akkadian word, either *lilatu*, meaning night or *lilu* meaning demon or ‘phantom (Knight & Levine, 1989, p.298). Isaiah 34:14 mentions the name explicitly: “Wildcats shall meet hyenas; goat demons shall call to each other, there to Lilith shall repose, and find a place to rest (p.298). There the term Lilith may resemble a ‘screech owl’; it later takes on the connotation of night demon (p.298). Markale (1975) notes “Lilith is the first created woman of the Demiurge Yahweh,” he then points out how “she is given to Adam as a wife-object, but rebels and refuses to obey the Father” (p. 153). The story of Lilith, suggests Knight and Levine is for Jewish women to follow the laws of family purity (eg. refrain from sexual intercourse during menstruation, light the Sabbath candles, also throw a piece of dough into the oven before baking in remembrance of temple sacrifice) (pp.298-299). Meanwhile, Yaweh cannot rid himself of this rebellious female, his only choice is to banish her to the realms of Hell, making way for Eve, “to be educated and...
moulded by man” (Markale, 1975, pp.153-154). Geoffrey Ashe’s study *The Virgin: Mary's Cult and the Re-Emergence of the Goddess* (as cited in Phillips, 1984), found: “Whatever the Life-Goddess Eve, was originally like she appears in Genesis as a Hebrew Pandora, the villainess in a story about the origin of human misfortune...She has dwindled to being merely the first woman, a troublemaker, created from a rib of the senior and dominant first man” (p.16).

Eve as woman is alienated her personality is incomplete because she is a mere caricature of femininity, “she will only be the image of the castrated form” of Yahweh and Adam (Markale, 1975, p.156; Miles, 1996, pp.262-267). Similarly, Blodeuwedd is the flower-woman from Celtic mythology whose existence is contrived out of magic by master magicians, as a manufactured object of male desire for a male’s possession (Markale, 1975, p.151): “They gathered flowers of the Oak tree, of broom and meadowsweet, which they used in their spells, to fashion the most beautiful and most perfect maiden in the world”, whom they married to Llue Llaw Gyfes” (p.149).

The message conveyed here is Nature is being technologised, manipulated, and controlled, by the master magicians Gwyddion and Math in their casting of spells to generate a beautiful flower-woman. Math and Gwyddon deny female sexuality and craft an entirely new woman “fashioned out of their masculine image” (Markdale, 1975, p.151). Markale contends “The father has triumphed over the Mother by creating a manufactured woman that he can manipulate and control for his own purposes as was Lilith and later Eve for Adam” (p.151).

It is not unreasonable to suggest that Blodeuwedd is created solely as a sexual object for Lleu, albeit “submit and remain in his shadow, obey him, renounce all male social functions, and use her sexuality only for procreation” (Markdale, 1975, p.151). A central concern of this study has been to point out how a common thread emerges, from a wide array of literature, which reveals how male hegemony, in the form of the masculine principle, has ousted the Feminine Principle in her fruitful role as creativity, to mould, fabricate, manipulate and finally subjugate into his ideal style of woman. This theme can also be found in more modern literature. Nigel Alexander’s study of Bernard Shaw’s play *Pygmalion: A Romance in Five Acts*, (Alexander, 1968) recounts the story of created woman and duchess, albeit through the whim and desire of the plays central male character, Higgins. Shaw’s play *Pygmalion* saw its completion in 1912 (p.15).
Alexander posits “the title of the play suggests that there is more involved than just winning a wager” as the story of *Pygmalion*, rendered in the tenth chapter of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is clearly the key source for the playwright’s inspiration (pp.52-53). Act 1 sees a duchess made out of a flower girl – Act 2 sees a woman made out of a duchess (p.55). Three men have vested interests in Eliza: her father assumes she is prostituting herself and wants his “cut”; Higgins is the “the grand puppet master” who wants to turn his chattel into a lady; while his offsider Pickering, together with himself, make a bet whether or not the undertaking is achievable (p.53). There is a parallel to this social commentary found in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* on the myth of *Pygmalion* (Innes, 1955, pp.231-232).

Curran (1984) contends in *Rape and Rape Victims in the Metamorphoses*, that “the varieties and strategies of violation to be found in the Metamorphoses are many”, he then explains “it is she who must bear the injury, guilt, societies blame and punishment” (p.264, p.271). The myth describes how the sculptor *Pygmalion* revolted by what he considers to be the amoral nature of the female sex swore to live a bachelor existence (Innes, 1955, pp.231-232). He created his perfect women out of stone, she is more beautiful than flesh and blood to the point that the sculptor falls in love with his own creation preferring her to a real female figure (Curran, 1984, p.271). Pygmalion creates his perfect alternate woman from stone, showers her with jewelry and beautiful clothing. He embraces her as if she was real, he fondles, kisses and caresses her as a “mere thing” (p.283). Unable to say no to his advances, he becomes the “predatory beast” who takes “pleasure in his victim’s terror and mastery of her will” (p.283). She is *Pygmalion*’s sex object to be raped, and violated at his pleasure for his own gratification. In doing so, the sculptor who has renounced the ‘depravity of the female sex’ acquiesces to the same double standards (Innes, 1955, pp.231-232).

Our women of flesh, and stone, bear the humiliation inflicted upon them by their male contemporaries. In Shaw’s story, Higgins may have won his bet, but Eliza won also. She became an educated woman and as such, gained emotional independence and freedom. Has our woman of stone gained anything? I don’t think so – she came to life only in the embrace of her creator.
Eve as Archetype for Her Daughters – Secondary Creation

Phillips (1984) notes the history of Eve begins with the appearance of Yahweh displacing the Mother Goddess, and thus rejecting the Feminine as a sacred entity (p.15). The archetypal image of wholeness initiated in the Great Mother, is ruptured as Eve can incarnate only one dimension of the original archetype, as the bringer of death (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.494). In this sense humanity is left without an image of “reconciliation to the whole, where once birth and death were related mythically through the body of the Goddess” (p.494). Sullivan in Rescuing Sex from the Christians, propose that the story of Adam and Eve is to Judaism, what the story of Pandora and her box is to Greek mythology: an attempt to explain how, why and when evil entered the world (Sullivan, 2006, p.6, Phipps, 1988, p.37). The parallels between Eve and Pandora are obvious: both were the “first woman” on earth; both yielded to temptation after being told not to (p.6). Phipps notes the “Pandora motif was transferred to the Eve myth in Jewish writing after the era of the Hebrew Bible and before Christianity arose” (Phipps, 1988, p.44). Philo of Alexandria steeped in Hellenistic culture must have been aware of the Greek myth of Pandora, hence in his commentary on Genesis, singled out women as the beginning of evil (p.44). Similarly, the existence of several sources apportioning blame to a woman is recognition that ‘the Adam and Eve story is a myth’ (Sullivan, 2006, p.6). Sullivan contends that the “Jewish parallel to the story of Pandora and her box did not become prominent in Old Testament studies until the last part of the 19th century” (pp.6-7). For centuries, argues Sullivan, theologians have viewed the mythical story of Adam and Eve as fact, known as the “Euphemerous Fallacy”. Theologians both Catholic and Protestant, perpetuate this notion to the present day (p.8). Considering the advancement in technology as well as academic scholarship Sullivan asks, why hasn’t the “Garden”, which is the “size of California”, ever been found (p.8)? Knight and Levine propose that no archaeological age or historical period correspond to the events as described in Genesis 1-11, the narratives belong to the primordial period set long before the origins of history. The stories of creation are myths that transcend time (Knight & Levine, 1989, p.197).

The significance of this apportion of blame is born out in the mythology of Genesis, where the history of Eve becomes the archetype for Western tenets on Women. Her narrative has been constantly reworked and retold, developing into a history of its own:
interpreted as theology, literature, law, and social custom (Phillips, 1984, p.115). At a
deeper level her story has shaped the very fabric of the nature and destiny of women in
the Western world. Tertulian, Church father (160-230ce) in an address to women (cited
in Antonelli, 2004) states: *And do you know that you are each Eve? The sentence of God
on this sex of yours lives on this age; the guilt, of necessity, must live too. You are the
devil’s gateway* (Antonelli, 2004, p.3). Antonelli notes Christianity through its
appropriation of the written Torah, without the oral (rabbinic) tradition, has entirely
misappropriated the story of Adam and Eve (Chava in Hebrew) to rationalise the
subordination of women. The Talmud (cited in Antonelli, 2004) amends this view “*How
does a woman help a man?...Does she not, then, bring light in his eyes, and put him on
his feet!*” (Talmud, Yev. 63a). Chavah or Eve is represented as being the crown of
creation, and on a spiritual level being higher than the man’s in perceiving her
husband’s character is in the word *vayiven* which the Rabbis relate to *Binah*, the quality
of Understanding. God “endowed [the woman] with more Understanding than the man”
(p.7). Antonelli draws attention to the fact that most Jews have grown up in a Christian
society and have internalised the notion that ‘Jewish Tradition’ is blamed for male
supremacy, nonetheless Antonelli views Christian misogyny as promoting anti-semitism
by cultivating Jewish self-hatred (p.3).

To follow the path of Eve, states Phillips, “is to discover much about the identity that
has been imposed upon women...If one would understand Woman, one must come to
terms with Eve” (p.115). The history of Eve is largely due to the misunderstanding and
malice from early Christian commentators (Antonelli, 2004, p. 3). Phillips contends in
his work *Eve: A History of Ideas*, “If Eve [had] refused subordination to her husband,
humanity would not have fallen; having fallen she is sentenced to a life of
subordination” (p.115). A woman’s only secure path to salvation is through marriage in
which she is to “understand herself as B, her husband as A” (p.115). In due course,
notes Phillips, the myth of the Fall gives licences to men to “blame women for all his
ills, make her labour for him, exclude her from religious office, and refuse her advice on
moral problems...Protestantism, like Judaism, is left with the doctrine of marriage as the
framework within which women are to be understood...she must be restrained and
bridled by her husband” (p.117).
Eve’s sentence looks like a form of capital punishment, Phillips (1984) suggests, from this it should be understandable why some feminists scholars see “gynocide (killing of women) as a part of Christian tradition...the Church fathers, rabbis, reformers, poets, dramatists, and painters wish if only there had never been a woman at all” (p.117).

Trible (1973c) rejects this claim, offering a different hypothesis, stating some commentators allege female subordination is based on woman being the last of creation, when Genesis 1, is contrasted with Genesis 1:27 where God creates ádham as male and female in one act (p.35). Inference is on the Priests for not recognising the equality of the sexes, because the Yahwists made woman a second, subordinate, and the inferior sex (p.35). Trible insists, “the last may be the first, as both the biblical theologian and literary critic know. Thus the Yahwist account moves to its climax, not its decline, in the creation of woman. She is not an afterthought; she is culmination” (p.35). Her argument however does not stand up to scrutiny as a great deal of evidence and interpretation points to the contrary.

**Technology of Blame**

It is evident that once again the patriarchs characterise women as being the source of evil, as in the story of the Nephilim where the daughters of men are cohabiting with the son’s of God, as told in Genesis 6:1-4:

> When the daughters of men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose. Then the Lord said, “My spirit shall abide in man forever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years”. The Nephilim were on earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were mighty men that were old. The men of renown.

The Book of Enoch incorporates the lost Book of Noah, describing Enoch’s dream in which he visualises the Nephilim myth. Collins notes this fragment of mythology comes from apocalyptic literature which addresses the problem of evil on the earth, giving an explanation for evil, also judgement and punishment (Collins, 2000, p.136; Knight &
Levine, 1989, pp.154, 220, 270). Collins suggests Enoch was aware of the story of Adam and Eve and their Fall spreading sin upon the earth (p.136). Richter contends the Watchers teach women all kinds of charms and spells, however the core of the story is beautiful women lead the giants astray while humanity suffers (Richter, 2009, pp.30-32). Women are irresistible to the giants as sexual deviance predominates within the story. The disastrous aftermath from this illicit sex ends in the women giving birth to half-breed giants, which is the “greatest sin of all” death and destruction follows with the Flood preparing the earth anew for Noah (p.32). Women, once again are the victims. After completing extensive research on the Enoch legends Catholic scholar J. T. Milik (as cited in Phillips, 1976), ascertained the history of the fallen angels in Enoch was older than Genesis 6, and in fact is a “direct summary of the earlier Enoch account” (Prophet, 2000, p.69). It is the victim daughters that are seen as the corrupters while the aggression males are seen as the ones corrupted (p.95).

The following is worth noting, as similar motifs of coupling occur between divine figures and humans which could be lifted straight from the pages of Greek and Roman mythology: Isis, Zeus, Aphrodite and Apollo for example (Knight & Levine, 1989, p.270) and yet, in Genesis it appears as though it is unique theological doctrine. Antonelli (2004) notes, that in the ancient world the practice of ritual deflowering was common. A young girl at the point of puberty or before marriage was deflowered as the blood of the hymen was believed to have certain magical powers (Antonelli, 2004, p.22). Only a ‘representative of a god’ could avoid “the perils of coming into contact with hymenal blood. In many culture the rupture of the hymen was carried out by a chieftan or prince (p.22) as in the droit du seigneure.

Prusak (1974) suggests “particular elements of the Watcher myth that were retained by later writers and blended into the Fall of Adam story reflect a sort of theological prejudice that sought to justify female subordination to a degree surpassing the curse in Genesis” (p.90; Phipps, 1988, p.46; Phillips, 1984, p.117; Daly, 1973, p.76). Women wear the mantle of responsibility, while suffering for all that is wicked in the world. On this particular subject, the patriarchs appear puzzled by the power of sexual drive, and the mysteries of generation and birth (1974, p.97). In this sense they “tried to kill two birds with the one stone”, the “de facto” existence of evil is identified with women as its source, which gives both a “theological explanation” and the “justification” for
maintaining the cultural facts of male dominance and female subservience (p.97). This prevailing attitude gave men a coping mechanism, and a further excuse, for connecting sexual drive and generation with evil, thereby “eliminating their need for self-control” (p.97). Sands (cited in Christ & Plaskow, 2016) notes, incest, violence, and other forms of sexual injustice come to be seen as “unreal eros’ and consigned to a shadow world of misunderstood desire. Sexuality...should not be viewed as the ‘intergrating center of life’ but as an ‘elemental power’ that ‘calls for moral discernment and choice’” (Christ & Plaskow, 2016, p.130). Eve’s primeval duping of Adam guaranteed male hegemony, because Eve’s supposed role in causing Adam’s downfall was really a tool for intimidation and male dominance. At this point every woman became a mirror of Eve, indicated as the cause of evil and the corrupter of men and angels (p.97). If we turn our focus to the aggression that would logically be directed toward the Father God, Phipps (1988) notes that it is “deflected to the women, where it assumes a destructive sexual form. The birth she gives is seen as a death; her presence is a permanent reminder of paradise lost” (p.95); “the New Testament does not record Jesus as speaking matters related to an alleged Fall and there is no basis in the Gospels for blaming the daughters of Eve for an evil world” (Phipps, 1988, p.54). The explication of 1 Timothy on the conduct of women keeping silent in church (1 Tim. 2:11-12), besides Paul’s notion that women were more susceptible to sin than men, therefore only the morally stronger male could be ordained (p.55). The bible’s decree of male supremacy has kept woman inferior to men for centuries, in essence the Church Fathers have refused to confer sacred office on a “gender alleged to be last in the order of creation but fist in the order of sin” (p.55), a topic that will be fully explored in a later chapter.

There are scholars who argue that within the prevailing Western tradition there is a psychological “pathology” running through the framework of patriarchy and religion in respect to the story of Eve (Daly, 1973, p.76; Phillips, 1984; Durham, 1997, p.119). With this in mind Durham advances Mary Daly’s argument, noting she has “written extensively on the pathology of patriarchy, her critique of patriarchal religions dismantles their facade of authenticity and reveals the sham of power grabbing, greed, and lust that many women have concluded exists at the core of patriarchal religions” (Durham, 1997, p.120). While Daly (1973) sees misogyny at the root of patriarchy, Durham proposes another avenue in exploring the roots of patriarchy, sighting the work of Karen Horney (a contemporary of Freud and Jung) (as cited in Durham, 1997), who
theorises “self hate” in her psychoanalytic theory. By taking this line of thought notes Horney, would give women more room to have open dialogue with men (p.120).

As noted throughout this work, theologians have for centuries promulgated the myth of Eve as the fated temptress. Higgins (1976) in *The Myth of Eve: the Temptress*, illustrates Eve, as a fated temptress, who cannot be explained except in terms of each commentator’s “own presuppositions and cultural expectations” (p.639). As we earlier intimated, Hesiod (Dettiene & Vernant, 1978, p.107), regarded women as the “root of all evil”, similarly, Christian theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (as cited in Thomas, 2009), in his writings (which are central to Catholic theology), thought of women as “impure”, having no “soul”, and being a “monster of nature” (p.18). It was Aquinas, who queried why women should have been created at all, reasoning their only prerequisite was reproduction. Theologians used the story of the Fall to add moral superiority to the merely ‘natural’ (Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Massam, 2012; Wijngaards, 1997; Noddings, 1993; Fiorenza, 1985). This is most apparent in the rendering by Christian theologians in their interpretation of Gen 3:6b: the woman was tempted and falls first; then she tempts man (Higgins, 1976, p.640). By substituting “tempts” and “temptress”, for the literal also gave some to her “husband” Higgins suggests is a relatively restrained way of interpreting the early third century theologian Tertullian when he writes: Eve “persuaded Adam”; Gregory Nazianzen writes of how Eve “beguiled her husband by pleasures”, and “she proved to be more of a hindrance than “helpmate” (p.64).

John Chrysostom (as cited in Higgins, 1976) uses Gen 3:6b to justify the later prohibition against women teaching, “The woman taught [the man] once...and ruined all”.

Ginzburg (as cited in Higgins, 1976) reports the rabbinical tradition that it “required tears and lamentations on her part to prevail upon Adam to take the baleful step” (Higgins, 1976, p.640).

Saint Augustine (as cited in Higgins, 1976) does not acknowledge Adam’s guilt preferring to blame “it upon the woman, yea even upon God himself, when he adds the words whom Thou gavest to me”. Bernard of Clairvaux (as cited in Higgins, 1976) puts it even more strongly, Adam responds to God as if to say, “You ought rather to be
accused who have joined me to such a woman as would lead me to sin” (Higgins, 1976, p.641).

Bennet (as cited in Higgins, 1976), commenting on the same text, likewise notes Adam’s inference that God is to blame “because He had given him a temptress for a companion” (Higgins, 1976, p.642).

To further the argument Higgins (1976) asks “Where was Adam”? There is something rather funny in the image of a man standing alongside his wife; never speaking or entering into a conversation, “never intervening to stop the temptation, leaving the woman to do the talking, thinking, deciding, acting, and only at the end reaching out his hand to accept and eat” what his wife had placed in his hand” (Higgins, 1976, p.646)? One would think such an interpretation turns the tables on all claims for the natural inferiority of the woman, therefore “it is hard to take seriously” (p.647). Parker (2013) notes in her article Blaming Eve Alone, of how Calvin (as cited in Parker, 2013) “dismisses Adam’s presences as by no means credible. In his need to explain that ‘the man is with her’, Calvin interprets this maritally, introducing a commentary on their relationship which seems unlikely (p.734). Parker (2013) claims the majority of Christian theology follows the exegetes of Jerome by assuming that Adam was separated from Eve during her temptation, therefore altering the story for subsequent commentaries. Jerome’s translation “sets a precedent that continues to the present” (p.738). In her article, Parker compares fifty English translations of Gen3:6b, noting the considerations of more than six centuries, over one-third of these translations does not specify that man is “with her” (p.378). I have included a sample of these translations covering a time span from 1382 to 2011, for further references refer to Parker, 2013, pp.739-741:

1. John Wycliffe 1382: “and aft to hir hoseband, and he eet”
2. American Standard Version 1901: “and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat”

3. Jewish Publication Society 1917: “and she also gave some to her husband and he did eat”
4. Revised Standard Version 1952: “and she also gave some to her husband and he ate”
5. New Jerusalem Version 1985: “she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate”
6. 21st Century King James Bible 1994: “and gave also to her husband with her; and he ate”
7. Common English Bible 2011: “and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it”

Baring and Cashford (1991) point out how the myth of the Fall has literally been taken as divine revelation, and thus fostering the idea that human nature is innately flawed. “The myth of Adam and Eve stands at the beginning of our cultural inheritance”, and, as the authors highlight, “whatever our religious background, it is characteristically offered to children at an age when all stories are thought to be true” (p.502). What is most apparent according to the writers is the story promotes a paradigm of blame which has been inherited through the collective unconscious (p.504). If, note the authors, “we consider the human psyche as a whole, from the perspective of Jung’s idea of the collective unconscious, it may be said that the deeper layers of the soul are suddenly deprived of a life governed by divine law, which had been understood for thousands of years through the image of the Goddess” (p.504). The Biblical study of Eve has been argued from several perspectives as her story has conceptually legitimised a patriarchal mandate which has sort to justify a paradigm of blame without any consideration of the consequences. The aftermath justifies the dominant image, presumed to be masculine, by those who find the status quo comfortable.

Eve and the Divine Feminine within Gnosticism

The term “Gnostic” has traditionally referred to various groups which flourished in the early centuries of the Common Era. These same groups emphasised the importance of “gnosis”, direct inner knowledge of God above dogma (Martin, 2010, p.15). As Martin comments in The Gnostics the First Christian Heretics, the word “Gnostic’ comes from the Greek word gnosис to know” (p.15). The author points out how the “origins of Gnosticism traditionally thought to be a form of Christianity which flourished in the first century CE – probably had its roots in or at least was influenced by Jewish, Pagan, Greek and Iranian traditions that predate Christianity” (Martin, 2010, p.21; Robinson,
Theologian, and scholar Elaine Pagels (1979, 2006), notes that Gnostic Christians authored the *Nag Hammadi* scriptures which were discovered near the Upper Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi in 1945, "What distinguishes these 'heterodox' text from those that are called 'orthodox' is at least partially clear: they abound in feminine symbolism that is applied in particular to God" (p.2). Until the discovery of the *Nag Hammadi Codices*, most of the information we had on the Gnostics was derived from the writings of the early Church Fathers, who regarded the Gnostics as heretics (p.21, Brakke, 2015). Robinson (1990) adds Gnosticism was not an alternate form of Christianity but rather an “radical trend of release from the dominion of evil or of inner transcendence that swept through late antiquity and emerged within Christianity, Judaism, Neoplatism, Hermeticism, and the like” (Robinson, 1990, p.10). As a new religion it was syncretistic drawing upon various religious heritages, but was held together by a very decided stance, which Robinson concurs "where the unity amid the wide diversity is to be sought” (p.10).

Gnostic scripts were rejected from the canonical collections as “heterodox”, by those who called themselves “orthodox” (Pagels, 1979, p.81, 2006). Twenty six books make up the New Testament, the writing of which Pagels states, concluded CE200, and all the feminine imagery for god had disappeared from orthodox Christian tradition (p.81). In the *Gnostic Gospels* (1979), Pagels identifies god being referred to as “Divine Mother”, and “Holy Spirit”, together they are identified as Wisdom (p.2) Within Gnostic dogma, Gnosis refers to a direct experiential knowing, and as Erbe (1991) notes in *God ’I AM’, Unity or Division*, “it is a knowing of the heart” as opposed “the head” (p.1). Martin (2010) adds, Gnosticism is non-intellectual and non-rational; it can only be experienced not explained, *gnosis* has the effect of liberating the soul, what differentiates Gnosticism from mainstream Christianity is the idea that *gnosis* alone will save, as opposed to faith (pp.28-29). For the Gnostic, faith is a poor cousin to *gnosis* as it effectively implies a distance between the believer and the divine. As the Gnostic bishop Stephen Hoeller (as cited in Martin, 2010) noted: “*Gnosis* is a spontaneous awakening which permanently shifts one’s consciousness achieved by experiencing a sudden moment of clarity and silence into which something makes its presence known” (p.30).

In her book *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, Elaine Pagels (1988) notes that Gnostic Christianity contained a prevalence of feminine symbolism, along with a reverence of
Eve, while according their women with the same respect. In Martin’s words (2010) “Gnostics regarded women as the equal of men and had female priests” all of which was an anathema to the Church Fathers (p.21). Scholars Pagels, Haag, Long, and Barnstone concur, the Gnostic text “championed” the position and “wisdom of women” as several Nag Hammadi tracts are voiced for women, or have female protagonists (Pagels, 1979, p.74, 2006; Haag, 2016, pp.205-206; Barnstone, 1984, p.593; Long, 1992, p.94; Brakke, 2015). All writers speak as one, in acknowledging the most striking example of text known as Thunder: Perfect Mind. The speaker is a woman possibly influenced by Jewish or Egyptian wisdom literature, the poem is a “revelation discourse” full of startling statements, many of them paradoxical (Martin, 2010; Long, 1992; Barnstone, 1984; Pagels, 1979, Brakke, 2015). Authors Long, Baring and Cashford, together with Barnstone note:

_that with the first line we are reminded of the statement by God in the Book of Revelation (1:8, 21:6, 22:13) “I Am the First and the Last” which is also resonant with the inscription above the temple of Isis and Neith at Sais, Egypt: I Am all that ever was, is or will be; this is a declaration of eternity and divinity_ (Long, 1992, p.95; Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.268; Barnstone, 1984, p.594).

Barnstone (1984) in _The Other Bible_ contends, it is characteristic of the revelation imparted by the “self-proclamation (“I Am...”) is of an antithetical or paradoxical sort: I am the whore and the holy one. I am the wife and the virgin” (p.594). There are other assorted exhortations to hear and reflect upon, along with reproaches for failing to do so (p.594). Moreover, Barnstone sheds light on how “Jewish wisdom literature and the Isis aetiologies provide texts which are parallel in tone and style, the particular significance of self proclamations of Thunder, Perfect Mind may be found in their antithetical character”. In Barnstone’s words “antithesis and paradox may be used to proclaim the absolute transcendence of the revealer, whose greatness is incomprehensible and whose being is unfathomable” (Barnstone, 1984, p.594, Arthur, 1984; p.158; Brakke, 2015).

**Thunder, Perfect Mind**

_I am the first and the last; I am the honoured one and the scorned one; I am the whore and the holy one; I am the wife and the virgin; I am the mother and the_
daughter; I am the members of my mother, I am the barren one and many are her sons; I am the mother of my father and the sister of my husband and he is my offspring; I am the silence that is incomprehensible and the idea whose remembrance is frequent and the word whose appearance is multiple; I am the utterance of my name; I am knowledge I am ignorance; I am shame I am boldness; I am shameless and am ashamed: I am strength I am fear; Give head to me; I am the one who is disgraced and the great one; I am she who does not keep festival and I am she whose festivals are many; I am the wisdom of the Greeks and the knowledge of the barbarians; I am the one whose image is great in Egypt and the one who has no image among the barbarians; I am the one who has been hated everywhere and who has been loved everywhere; I am the I am the one whom they call Life and you have called Death (Long, 1992, pp.91-92; Barnstone, 1984, p.595; Arthur, 1984, p.158).

Long (1992), in A Charriot Drawn by Lions, contends that the above lines describe contrasting human conditions – “whore and holy one, wife and virgin, mother and daughter, barren with many sons” (p. 95) which can be construed as a totality of experience. We are reminded of earlier goddesses, for example the Lady Inanna, who with many lovers retained or regained her virginity regularly. The “whore and holy one” also evokes memories of the quedeshim, the ‘holy ones’, servants of the temple who performed acts of sacred prostitution in the furtherance of a fertile and prosperous society (p.95) as discussed in Chapter 2.

Research from Pagels (1979, 2006) illuminates how the Gnostics viewed the “Divine Mother” as the “eternal mystical Silence”, the “Holy Spirit” and “Wisdom” (p.75). The Greek feminine term for “Wisdom”, Sophia, translates a Hebrew feminine term hokhma (p.75). Wisdom bears several connotations in Gnostic sources: she is the “first universal creator” who brings forth all creatures; she enlightens human beings and makes them wise; she is “incorruptible Wisdom” for insight (gnosis) (pp.75-76). Martin (2010), notes that most Gnostics creation stories depict the actual creator of matter as Sophia, the Wisdom of the true god (Martin, 2010, p.33; Turner, 1990, p.510; Brakke, 2015). Details of this will be discussed in Chapter 5. Gnostic sources (Pagels, 1979) continually use sexual symbolism to describe God (p.72). Another newly discovered text from Nag Hammadi, the Trimorphic Protенкоia (literally, the ‘Triple-formed
Primal Thought’), celebrates the feminine powers of Thought, Intelligence, and Foresight: “[I] am [Protennoia the] Thought that [dwell] in [the Light]…[she who exists] before the All…I move in every creature…I am the Invisible One within the All” (p.77). Hitherto, are the self-predicatory aretalogies in which Protennoia recites her divine identity, and role, in the creation and salvation of the world (Turner, 1990, p.510).

Pagels (1979, 2006), Robinson (1990), Turner, (1990) and Martin (2010), Brakke (2015), studies found that sources of Gnostic teachings, that is, secret gospels, revelations, mystical teachings, are among those not included in the select text that constitutes the New Testament collection; every text within the Gnostic canonical collection has been omitted and branded heretical by those who called themselves orthodox Christians (Pagels, 1979, p.78). The theologian asks: Why were the Gnostic texts omitted? Gnostics themselves asked this question of their orthodox opponents (p.78). Pagels answers the question by affirming it was “the blind misogyny of the early church Fathers such as Tertullian, and Irenaeus who feared the power of women’s sexuality” (p.81). They based their outlook on what they considered constituted Biblical text, anything that remotely hinted towards the “feminine element of the divine”, or “feminine participation within orthodoxy was anathema” to the early Church Fathers (p.82). In this context, the Orthodox Church branded Gnostic beliefs as heresy, and as Pagels astutely notes the Church felt threatened, since the Orthodox Church hierarchy is modeled on the “Roman chain of command”, and “controlled from the pope downwards”, to achieve gnosis, knowledge or insight, “one did not need the benefit of clergy” (pp.59-60). Martin (2010) notes the Gnostics regarded women as the equal of men and had female priests, a concept which horrified the Church Fathers. Doctrinal conformity defined the orthodox faith, as the pope was head of the church, the husband was head of the woman, female will and autonomy was expunged. Such contradictory attitudes towards women reflect the social and cultural changes that were happening in the ancient world (Pagels, 1979, 2006).
Technology of Shame

In The Intellectual Foundations of Christian and Jewish Discourse, Neusner and Chilton (1997) argue, “sexual Puritanism and anti-feminism had its roots deep in the pre-Christian past, in the dualism between mind and matter (mind being superior and matter inferior) in thinkers such as Zoroaster (c.630-553B.C.), Buddha (c.563-483), and Plato (428-348 B.C.) (p.50). An example of this misogyny is demonstrated in the works of Hesiod’s Theogony, here Pandora is the Greek equivalent of Eve (Phillips, 1984, p.23). Reik (as cited in Phillips, 1984) argues that it is the “intensive misogynistic tendencies that dominated a certain late phase of Greek civilization [which] transformed the lure of the female body into an organ of danger and terror” turning the sexual attraction of women into a malicious temptation” (p.23). Pandora’s “pythos” or (jar) is turned into “pyxis” or “box”, symbolic of the female genitalia out of which all evils of the world are now contained (p.23). A significant facet to the story is the blatant sexism of Hesiod as the poet gives Pandora a “bitches mind”, and since she is posited as a reflection of Greek womanhood, all women’s character and makeup become related to the beasts of nature: “there is No beast more shameful than a woman”; her “beastly excessive nature”, and “animal appetites” associate her with dogs rendering her into a “bitch on heat who mates indiscriminately and frequently”; she is “shamed” for failing to control her sexual appetite, all of which Phillips contends “reduces her humanity” (p.23). The significance of the above argument, is born out in the fact the Hebrew patriarchs and the church Fathers did not, and could not, let go of the story of Pandora in favour of scripture (p.23). Pandora’s mythology is super-imposed upon the history of Eve, and since the body in question was woman, and deemed inferior, the patriarchs stipulated Eve was created out of “Adam’s substance, in Hebrew tsela (“rib, but also stumbling”), especially for him” and as her character is flawed, her purposes are subordinate to his (Phillips, 1984, pp.27-28), her subjugation is intrinsic to the “order of creation” Ruether, 1974b, p.1). Phillips’ (1984) research further notes there are disparaging comments on women in the Midrash XV111.8, even though an “organised collection of stories of Adam and Eve that do not occupy for Judaism the crucial position they occupy for Christianity” (pp.29-30). Rabbi Joshua of Siknin (as cited in Phillips, 1984) secures from Genesis explanations for the condition of Women: “She goes with her head covered because ‘she is like one who has done wrong and is
ashamed of people’; she precedes corpses at funerals because she brought death into the world; she menstruates as a reminder that it is she who shed Adam’s blood (XV11.8, Phillips, 1984, p.30).

In this light, the Genesis Midrash XV11.2 (CE 600-1,200), gives an account where God considered well, and from what part of Adam he sought to fashion Eve:

I will not create her from his head, lest she be swellheaded; nor from the eye; lest she be coquette; nor from the ear; lest she be an eavesdropper; nor from the mouth, lest she be prone to gossip; nor from the hand, lest she be light-fingered; nor from the heart, lest she be prone to jealousy; nor from the foot, lest she be a gadabout; but from the modest part of man, for even when he stands naked, that part is covered (Phillips, 1984, p.30)

Scholars Graves and Patai (1983) contend, for the Hebrew patriarchs and the early Church Fathers, anything to do with women and sexuality was an abhorrence, and a denial of life and as such “the West is still trapped in the Augustinian mind set” (p.69). The negative attitude towards women in the Bible is a symptom of something far deeper that forces us to enter the realm of the unspoken, and perhaps the unconscious when justifying this type of behavior from men. Spong astutely notes men are frightened of their own desires and sexual intimacy, projecting their own inadequacies and fears onto women (Spong, 2005, p.96). Roman poets such as Lucan enjoyed satiri sing older women for their body odours; Augustine developed the doctrine on original sin, instead of viewing a woman’s body as a garden of delight he describes her organs of pleasure as the “gateway between urine and faeces” (Gutheridge, 1999, p.49). A female’s body and her body fluids are seen as sinful, a source of pollution on the one hand, and on the flip-side, as desirous by man (p.49). Karen Armstrong (2003) points out in her book, A History of God from Adam to the present of how “Augustine was clearly puzzled that God should have made the female sex at all” (p.49). Augustine, as well as the likes of Tertullian, were not the only Christian Fathers who directed their hostility towards women, Marina Warner (2000) quotes in Alone of all Her Sex, passages from St. Jerome (pp.73-75), along with passages from St John Chrysostom (as cited in Higgins, 1976) both of whom held a contempt for the feminine (pp.58, 153, 352). Neusner and Chilton (1979) describe the lengths some clerics would go to in cutting themselves off from any form of intimacy with opposite sex, in Origin’s case he castrated himself rather than fall
victim to the sins of the flesh (p.79). This being so, it is clear that Hebrew patriarchs and Church Fathers had a morbid dread of women not only for the sin of ‘lust’, but to the fact that women bleed (Coote & Ord, 1991, p.73). “When a woman has a discharge of blood which is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening” (Lev. 15:19).

In the Beginning: Creation of the Priestly History, Coote and Ord (1991) contend “the Aaronid priesthood had a virtual obsession with the control and discharge of blood” and as women bleed, her monthly cycle “cannot be controlled therefore her period made her impure” (p.72, Reik, 1960, 1970; Antonelli, 2004, pp.276-287). From their point of view she is less in tune with God’s creation than the male, her impurity makes her unclean; a male is twice as clean in the “hierarchy of the created order” (Spong, 2005, p.100). Both patriarch and early church Fathers contend her very presence is a pollutant, contaminating everything she touches, making her monthly cycle a sin. Ruether (1990) notes pollution taboos linger in Catholicism even for laywomen: Catholic canon law opposes laywomen and girls from performing even semi-sacerdotal roles, such as alter server (p.8). The sexual woman is put at the bottom of the hierarchy of clerical order over lay, male over female, celibate over sexual. “If called upon all women, even the celibate, are enjoined to read the Scripture outside the sanctuary rail. The roots of this injunction lie in the perception of women as impure and hence to be excluded from the sacred male space” (pp.8-9). This is just one of the arguments put forward by the Catholic Church for the exclusion of women for ordination and leadership which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

In Denike’s (2003) The Devil’s Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate, women are made to feel shame and dirty over menstrual blood and as Denike astutely notes it is “a way of stealing women’s power”, as this bleeding is tied to the “power of her ability to create life” (p.19), an aspect of which is respected, but also feared by the males, as if woman is in possession of some magical power (Coote & Ord, 1991; Spong, 2005; Antonelli, 2004). In Denike’s words “pollution fears, rules and rituals operate through the symbolic medium of the physical body to work upon the body politics” (2003, p.19). The Book of Leviticus establishes purification rituals relating to menstrual blood, food and hygiene informing us “to the insecurity and permeability of the boundaries and
margins that define the social body” (Denike, 2003, p.19; Coote & Ord, 1991; Antonelli, 2004).

When a woman has conceived and gives birth to a boy, she shall be unclean for seven days, with the same uncleanness as for her menstrual period...If she gives birth to a girl, for fourteen days she shall be unclean as at her menstruation, after which she shall spend sixty six days in becoming purified in her blood” (Leviticus 12:1-5).

In Cycles of Shame: Menstrual Shame, and Sexual Decision Making, Sholer, Ward, Merriwether and Carruthers (2005) contend “menstrual shame is indirectly associated with sexual decision-making via body shame – although menstruation is a natural body process, it bears a strong cultural taboo that remains unacknowledged and out of sight, this attitude is often paired with an attitude that menstruation is dirty and disgusting” (p. 324). Many girls report shame about being seen with a menstrual product, or yet worse bleeding through clothing, and some adolescent girls report they are embarrassed simply by the fact that they menstruate (p.324). Shame about menstruation, suggest the authors, is often extended to the vagina and its surrounding areas, which are considered by many women unspeakable or unpleasant. Despite recent attempts to celebrate women’s anatomy, such as Eve Ensler’s ‘Vagina Monologues’, and the growing comfort some women have with their bodies, it remains common for women to feel shame, albeit using euphemisms in a way to avoid naming their genitals (p.324).

Strange as it may seem, circumcision began as a male attempt to capture the woman’s “menstrual power” and as Spong (2005) suggests this is how it “entered the religious arena” (p.99: Briffault, 1969; Walker, 1985; Ehrenreich, 1998; Eller, 2010). This barbaric act requires the body of the man to be mutilated enabling him to bleed from the genitals and not die (Spong, 1005, p.99; Briffault, 1969; Barnstone, 1984; Ehrenreich, 1998; Eller, 2010). Baile (2003) asks, “does female blood (the blood of menstruation) have the same power and positive valence as male blood (the blood of circumcision). Which raises the question does blood have a gender in Jewish culture, if so what does it mean” (p.18)? Mary Douglas (as cited in Baile, 2003) pursues the same research as Denike by noting, “female genital blood is a site of danger and impurity, but also of power (p.24, Denike, 2003). Baile (2003) proposes a similar argument to Douglas noting “the polluting character of menstrual blood is a result of a sacred power, which comes from a sacred site within the female body (p.18). One might suggest that a
certain consensus has emerged around gender and blood in Jewish culture: the blood controlled by men establishes covenant, the sacrifice of the foreskin set the Hebrew male apart from all others, and as women had no foreskin to offer, their power is effectively neutered thus shifting the emphasis to “masculine values and patriarchy” (Shlain, 1999, p.92; Knight & Levine, 1989, pp.264-269). Elliott Wolfson (as cited in Eller, 2010) concurs that according to Hebrew tradition:

*It is precisely and exclusively by means of circumcision that one can see God, for this act removes the potential barrier – symbolised by the cutting of the foreskin – separating human and divine...The opening of circumcision results in an opening to God. Exactly how the foreskin is an obstacle to seeing God is not explained by him nor by the scriptural writers, but it does make one wonder about the about the ‘spiritual vision’ of women (p.320).*

Another facet of the religious arena is the notion of relics which are actually the material remains of a person (Gutheridge, 1999, p.88). The ritual of the Eucharist, contends Gutheridge, is based upon Aristotelian ideas, (changing from one substance into another) where the transformation of wine and wafer, is transformed into the body, and blood of Christ (p.128). Transubstantiation is nothing more than a spiritual transformation of the symbolic relic (the wine) into the actual relic (the blood) (p.128). With this in mind, it is fascinating how the life blood and creative power of the Feminine is inverted, in view of the transformative character of blood which is taken up by Christianity, and portrayed as a Christian mystery, out of which the trans-substantiative blood of Christ transforms the adherent. On this subject Mary Douglas (as cited in Baile, 2014) argues menstruation is a symbol of power that is “sacred”. A sacred power has life-giving and life-destroying possibilities that “in this sense menstruation, is a divine fluid, more sacred than normal blood” (Baile, 2014, pp.23-24). Eliade (1996) notes the structure of the sacred is something possessing mana (pp.19-23) (as argued in chapter one). In this sense, the sacred, creative, and transformative aspect of the Feminine is denied by Judeo/Christianity viewing women’s creative fluid as a toxic pollutant as espoused in Leviticus 12:1-5. Grace Jantzen (as cited in Frankenberry 2018) contends a new imaginary is needed for religion, she points to “a feminist symbolic of ‘natality and flourishing’ as an alternative to the category of mortality, ‘verging on necrophilia’, with which the Western tradition has been saturated” (p.16).
Jantzen’s study suggests that a “preoccupation with death and violence subtends the masculine imaginary, and it is therefore necessary to change the imaginary” (p.16). Male mythology “had begun to provide the primary socio-cultural medium for the establishment and promulgation of patriarchy” (Laura & Buchanan, 2012, p.172), female symbolism is inverted, while women’s gender and sexuality remains a subject for discrimination.

Rape as a Technology of Violence

Western civilization is fed by at least three sources of misogynistic religious literature; Mesopotamian/Babylonian, the Classical/Roman world and from the Judeo/Christian tradition. All subscribe to a dualistic belief system, based on the fact that their creation myths have removed the Feminine face of the Divine. Masculine imagery is central to conception, often carried out in the form of rape, a notion which still resides in the collective unconscious (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.504). Genesis 3:20 informs us of how Adam named Eve Hawwāh, “The Mother of all Living” (Phillips, 1984, p.32). Phillips contends “Genesis removes the power of the woman through the act of naming she is placed under the control of the one who names”, Adam’s act of naming is a “kind of rape” and “sexual dominance” (p.32). The message conveyed here is the first male names his partner thus formalizing a reversal of the normal course of events (p.32). In this sense continues Phillips “she is “ishshah” taken-out of man – she is born from him not him from her” (p.32). In an act of patriarchal takeover Genesis has inverted the right of the mother in the role of naming, for, as Thomas argues, ‘no child’ born from her body is seen as illegitimate (Thomas, 2009, p.21). In Celtic Sexuality, Power, Paradigms and Passion, Cherici (1988) describes how within the Celtic tradition ancestry is placed on the mother’s side, and as sexual freedom is a normal part of life accruing no guilt, the child uncertain of paternity is named after the mother (pp.27, 48). Thomas reminds us that in “civilised” society only a man could call a child a bastard, his child must be the legitimate and rightful heir to his property and money which are all of his own creation (Thomas, 2009, p.21).

As this chapter has clearly argued, academics have put forward a psychoanalytic hypothesis, suggesting that it is fear which lies behind the rationale of men’s hatred of
women. It follows that the way in which we describe things is the way we conceptualise their meaning within the actual framework of the words themselves. The languages of the Western world that describe sexual intercourse, those words in the closest intimacy between a man and a woman, reflect that of contempt and violence: bang, smash, nasty, hitting, driving into, poking, thrusting, and beating all become part of the collective to remain permanently (Phillips, 1984, p.95). Women are envisioned as “carnal scapegoats”, or “the Other”, and yet “she is the body from which man emerged” thus causing resentment, and as de Beauvoir (1953) reiterates “From the day of his birth, man begins to die: this is the truth incarnated in the Mother…and this resentment in man extends to the flesh he impregnates…He wishes to venerate his mother and love his mistress; at the same time he rebels against them in disgust and fear…project[ing his emotions and frustrations] onto women” (pp.127, 135). Misogyny contends Priven (2007), is also “the opposite paradigm of hallucinatory evil, and violence against women can be deeply gratifying to the man humiliated by his dependence and need for love” (p.12). In his article Terror, Sexual Arousal and Torture Priven describes how “hatred is a mélange of shameful and resentful envy, need, and fear. The evacuation of these anxieties through punishment can be incredibly satisfying” (p.12). Joana Bourke (as cited in Priven, 2007) amasses an array of evidence demonstrating how soldiers enjoyed violence (p.5). Soldiers report how they find butchery “a turn-on” it is the initiation into the power of life and death whereby death turns into ecstasy giving “a male experience of childbirth” (p.5). The Old Testament is full of stories narrating religious wars amongst the ancient Hebrews:

When the Lord, your God, brings you into the land which you are to enter and occupy, and dislodge great nations before you – the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites: seven nations more numerous and more powerful than you and you defeat them, you shall doom them and show them no mercy (Deut. 7:1-3).

Lerner (1986a) espouses slavery deriving from war and conquest is a form of technology (p.132). Women, because of their reproductive potential, and their function as a means of exchange, are natural booty of war (p.78). Slavery argues Lerner, is an image of subjugation, while rape constitutes the final act of male dominance (p.78). Women are seen as a natural resource, “naturally fit[ting] to be ruled by patriarchy”
It follows that slavery as an institution acts as a conceptual model for the subordination of women with the patriarchal family supplying the structural model (p.89). In her study *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, Susan Brownmiller (as cited in Wolf, 1993) argues “some men’s rape of women keeps all women subjected to men” (p.132). She also points to rape as an institutionalized part of warfare, “locating men’s ability to rape as part of their biological construction” (p.132). Scholars Skandhan, Kaoru, Mukand and Sumangala (2013) advance the hypothesis that women exude a “sex attractant, or pheromone, on the day of ovulation which attracts men and this is probably a hidden biological cause ending in rape” (p.24). In their article *Place of Pheromone in Rape*, the authors suggest the rate of rape is increasing all over the world with the age of the rape victim varying from 15 months to 82 years arguing, “the cause of rape need not be lust or revenge” (p.24). Their research found that there is a hidden cause for rape, just as animals emit pheromones, human’s also emit pheromones, which are “likely [to be] the hidden biological cause for rape in many cases” (p.24). The following studies indicated the presence of human pheromone in sexual activities: “synchronisation of menstrual cycles...the presence of pheromone secretions in the human vagina and sweat glands; secretions change daily according to woman’s hormonal status” (p.25). The authors noted there is also evidence for women being attracted to men by smell (p.25). Fessler reported rape “took place during ovulation time and majority of victims became pregnant following the crime. Among adult women an estimated 32,101 pregnancies resulted from rape each year. The number revealed the seriousness of the situation that the rape took place on the day of ovulation. Not all coitus ended in pregnancy” (Fessler as cited in Skandhan et al., 2013, p.25). However, a significant facet to the argument is women are the victims of sexual violence particularly in the instance of war, or because of their ethnicity and religion.

Guichaoua (2016) describes how Denis Mukwege has dedicated his life to caring for victims of rape and other forms of sexual abuse in Africa (p.2). Mukwege has been treating female victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1996, despite the supposed end of the Second Congo War in 2003, violence against women remains endemic (p.2). In *Sexual Violence Increasing in Democratic Republic of Congo*, Wakabi (2008) points out how “over the past decade, humanitarian workers say rape is becoming more violent and more common, yet the world continues to pay lip-service to the crisis in the central African country” (p.15). Reports of gang rapes,
sexual slavery, purposeful mutilation of women’s genitalia, and killings of rape victims is common place in eastern Congo, especially northern Kivu province, where fighting has existed for years (p.15). Women and girls suffer from debilitating damage to their reproductive systems, resulting in multiple fistulae, as well as broken bones, severed limbs, and burns (p.15). Wakabi sheds light on the serious consequences faced by women and girls in their mental health, including depression and suicide, besides those of the family and community members who are forced to witness, or are forced to participate in the violence (p.16). Now twenty years long, DRC is dubbed the “rape capital of the world” with women still suffering (Guichaoua, 2016, p.5). Priven (2007) writes “If evil is banal, it may be because we wish to commit it without being blamed or punished” (p.4). In Religion & Violence: The Suffering of Women, Rakoczy examines the insideos links between patriarchy, violence and Christianity and their affects on women demonstrated by the prevalence of domestic violence in South Africa (Rakoczy, 2004, p.29). Christianity, argues Rakoczy, is a patriarchal religion which does violence to women through its use of male language for God, its hierarchical structure, and traditions, the Household Codes in the New Testament all of which endorse the subordordination of women (p.29). South African society is a very violent society, with high levels of domestic violence, Rakoczy astutely points out “the home is a very dangerous place for women”, change can only be implemented when men acknowledge their role as perpetrators and take responsibility for their actions. Through the teachings of Jesus, that is, love, respect and more inclusive images taken from the New Testament Church leaders are challenged to break the silence and speak out against the surge of domestic violence (p.29). One has to ask will these atrocities carried out on women ever end?

Shifting our direction across continents to Bangladesh, and the plight of Rohingya women are fleeing from Myanmar, because of the systematic rape and torture by Myanmar soldiers. In Myanmar Soldiers Systematically Gang-Raped Rohingya Women, Mahamud (2017) astutely notes “Rohingya women have been systematically targeted on the account of their ethnicity and religion” (p.1). Women and girls have been gang-raped and tortured by multiple soldiers. Mahamud asserts, “many have died as a result of the rape” (p.1). Mahamud’s study found women and girls are being shamed, and humiliated through forced public nudity as a result of their beliefs and traditions (p.1). Those involved in the sexual violence states Mahamud, “include Myanmar border
police, and militias composed of Buddhist, and other ethnic groups in Rakhine...the UN now estimate the majority of the Rohingya once living in Rakhine – previously estimated at around one million – have fled a campaign of violence that has been likened to ethnic cleansing” (p.1).

In 1993, *The Myth of Male Power* by Warren Farrell came onto the market. Central to Farrell’s argument is that “men are the disposable sex”, [my italics] his book covers men in our legal system, politics, religion, domestic violence, date rape and sex (2012, p.6). Women, argues Farrell, are “greedy bitches” who falsely accuse men of rape to get money or revenge, while “parasitic wives” live luxuriously on the earnings of their overworked husbands (p.6). When he talks about power, it is not power over women per say, but "the ability to be in control of our own life” (p.6). Farrell contends “men are twice as likely to be victims of violence over women, even when rape is included, also men are three times likely to be victims of murder” (p.11). Authors, Flood (2009), and Winter (1994) reviewed Farrell’s *The Myth of Male Power*, suggesting that Farrell’s argument is a “joyless whinge that is wholly blind to the unruly aspects of the sexual debate” (Winter, 1994, pp.2-4). Susan Faludi and Naomi Wolf (cited in Winter, 1994), in speaking up for the so-called disadvantaged group contend: “ No amount of fudged statistics can persuade us that all women occupy all senior positions in society, or, that women earn more than men, or that men get battered and raped by women” (p.2).

In theory, women have come a long way regarding the issues of inequality, and in this sense, men need to take responsibility for their own actions, if women are to have any form of autonomy. In Michaelson (2016), *Men’s Resistance to Woman's Empowerment* (2016), found men have to grow and encourage women’s empowerment (p.1). In this way “humanity can only progress to the degree that women do”, and as they make up more than half of the population of the planet, an urgent need is required to root out some of the “primitive elements of this inequity” (p.1). Men are not malicious: Michaelson and others point out in this study, that discrimination arises from psychological influences which are largely unconscious (p.1). He notes the "feminine discount" is a problem which stems in part from an “age-old mentality that still perceives social relations of who is superior and who is inferior. This form of mentality dates back hundreds of thousands of generations, acted upon by both sexes, through religious affiliation ("my religion is superior to yours")” (p.2). He reminds us that it is a
mentality that works both ways, “the missing ingredient is an emotional and mental connection to ones intrinsic value and goodness” (p.2). If we examine Michaelson’s argument at a deeper level, the answer to men’s oppression of women stems in part from *men's fear of femininity and of women* [my italics] (p.2).

This theme was explored by Sigmund Freud (1918) (as cited in Michaelson, 2016) when he wrote in his essay: *The Taboo of Virginity*:

> men have shown over time - through the taboos, customs, and avoidances involving their relations with women - "a generalised dread of women." What is this dread? It's based in castration anxiety, which is man's fear that women will take away all his strength, infect him with their femininity, and reveal him to be a weakling. Man is afraid that woman may be his better self. He is afraid because he does not want to acknowledge his resonance with (or emotional attachment to) a profound self-doubt at the heart of his existence. His primitive instinct is to cover up this largely unconscious part in him by making out that women are the weaker sex and himself the proud agent of mighty exploits (Michaelson, 2016, p.2).

What needs pointing out is that like women, men are also full of self doubt. Michaelson (2016) suggests men under estimate their value or power, the violence associated with war compels them to destroy, with women being their primary victims (p.4). The author concludes with the statement: “The only powers they can trust is their own self aggrandisement” (p.4).

We need to challenge men's patriarchal attitudes about women and their sense of male entitlement in relation to women. Men need to break away from their identification with power and control and construct a sense of self that values equality and partnership with women (Pease, 2015, p.1). Throughout my thesis I have put forward arguments drawing attention to the discrimination, and subjugation carried out on women because of their “creational difference” (Fiorenza, 1987, p.7). Students of RE should be exposed to feminist critiques of Orthodox text, by way of Public Theology as a means for addressing all forms of religiously endorsed sexism.
Pornography and the Technology of Violence

Pornography is only one expression of how society views male and female bodies and how it conceptualises sex (Eisler, 1995, p.19). The modern pornographic industry offers the most dramatic example of erotisization of female submission (p.19). The onslaught of porn contends Wolf (2003) “is responsible for deadening the male libido in relation to real women, and leading men to see fewer women as ‘Porn Worthy’” (p.1). In her book *The Porn Myth*, Naomi Wolf (2003) discusses how feminist Andrea Dworkin (as cited in Wolf, 1993), an anti-porn activist in the eighties, argued that “opening the floodgates of pornography would lead men to see real women in sexual debased ways” (p.3). Pornography turns women into victims of dirty cowardly “Peeping Toms who leer at them with greedy eyes” (MacAthur, 2016, p.1). Women are traded worldwide as animals for sexual slavery, thousands of girls and women are in houses of prostitution, and military bordellos worldwide (Eisler, 1995, Guichaoua, 2016, p.5). Research from Eisler reveals there has been widely documented evidence by “numerous INTERPOL and UNESCO reports, even though (despite the 1949 United Nations Convention for the Suppression and the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others) it remains by and large unprosecuted” (Eisler, 1995, p.19). It is not only in pornographic magazines, films, and videos seen by millions of men and boys that “sex in our society is linked with the degradation, humiliation, domination, torture, and even killing of women”, it happens in real life (p.19). Eisler describes how the general theme of women and (sometimes little girls) portrayed as male sex objects, that we discover “women in chains, women being humiliated, degraded, beaten, tortured and even killed – as evidenced by the infamous ‘snuff’ films, that we are now leaning some women were actually killed” (p.19).

In *Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth and the Politics of the Body*, Eisler (1995) indicates how: “this embedding of distrust and control of sexual relations between men and women can equate sexual arousal with the domination of woman by man – what better way of unconsciously programming women to accept subservience and domination than through the erotization of female submission” (p.6).

As established earlier women are made to feel shame and guilt by their bodily functions, reproductive capacity and by their very gender: where is the freedom and dignity in
that? In assessing the modern pornography industry, Eisler (1995) provides details on how pornography “tends to dehumanise both men and women and to confuse sexual pleasure with sadomasochistic inflicting or experiencing pain – this is not new – [it] goes back in time to our cultural evolution from partnership to dominator model” (p.6). In an essay on *Pornography and Male Supremacy*, Stolenburg (as cited in Eisler, 1995) writes “once you have sexualised inequality, once it is a learned, and an internalised prerequisite for sexual arousal and sexual gratification, [also] sexual freedom it becomes a licence for men to more effectively hunt and subdue women” (p.262). From Stolenburg’s viewpoint, “Pornography institutionalises male supremacy, the way segregation institutionalises white supremacy” (p.262).

Brunskell-Evans (2015) argues, the internet, social media, mobile phones, violent video games, all have increased the need for sex education to be conducted in the classroom to help teenagers understand sex and sexuality (p.1). As a Research Associate, from the University of Leicester UK, Brunskell-Evans advises "teaching teenagers about pornography is nothing like real sex...the majority of main-stream pornography is similar and hard-core in its narrative in eroticising the dehumanisation and degradation of women" (p.3). In 2016, News.com revealed:

*More than 70 Australian schools are targets for a perverse pornography ring of teen boys and young men secretly swapping and exchanging graphic sexual images of non-consenting female students and other non-consenting women...more than 2,000 images have been posted or traded by Australian members since the group began operating last year* (p.1).

Kaitlynn Mendes, Jessalyn Keller and Jessica Ringrose (as cited in Phipps, Ringrose, Renold & Jackson, 2018) identify digital media as a generative activist space (p.4). The authors explore what they term “the effective solidarities” which emerge from girls and women on such platforms, they map out forms of mediated feminist activism expressed through web-sights and social media post protesting “rape culture” (p.4). The paper includes a mix of “hyper-empirical discussions including how women use social media such as the anti-street harassment website Hollaback” (p.4). The posts are explored for affective commonalities including fear, and anger, while revealing their experiences of sexual harassment and rape cultures (p.4). From the digital content the paper attempts to investigate the affective politics around the “anti-rape hashtag
"#BeenRapedNeverReported". Research from the hashtag attempts to correlate the experiences of abuse and violence through interviews and Twitter posters (p.4).

Julia Baird (August 2016) from ABC The Drum, stated a tip off came from a member of the public, which led to an investigation by the sex crime-squad, in reference to a pornography ring that operated out of schools, crossing across all cultures. The crime-squad discovered the source of the pornography ring came from overseas, targeting the UK, Canada, Australia, France, and Italy. Baird revealed the users requested young girls by a specific code: her image is taken without her knowledge, while she sleeps or showers, and uploaded to web sites. Run by an international ring, targeting Australian female forms, rapist and sex offenders view the images finding them titillating. Acting as a “terrorist within”, the ring traumatises young women depriving her of her right to consent (p.2). By an epistemology defining the concept of a woman in terms of her gender, Laura and Buchanan (2012) argue “any woman may be covertly and sometimes overtly devalued and accordingly, treated as a resource for subjugation and expropriation” (p.173).

Commenting on the Inquiry into the harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the internet, as authored by the Australian Christians Submission to the Senate Environment and Communication 2012, Michael Flood (2012) notes, "there is an increasing body of evidence linking pornography to sexual assault, in effect, suggesting porn might be a form of rape training for adolescents" (p.3). Continued viewing of porn causes mental dysfunction, and the real possibility of serious health and social problems including long-term public health crisis (p.3). There is an urgent need of technology to block websites as well as educational programs detailing the harmful effects of porn (p.4). Authors Giuliano and Allard (2001), Kids and Porn: It Ain’t Your Father’s ‘Playboy’, spell out how “Video games as well as pornography flood the brain with dopamine - sexual content activates additional aspects of the brain's reward circuitry” (p.1). Weiss (2016) found boy's brains are being "rewired to demand unrealistic levels of novelty stimulation and excitement" (p.2; Papadpoulas, 2010, p.6). Where are the moral implications for addressing these issues? Notably, there is an urgent need for the uncomfortable conversation between child, and parent, surrounding the discussion of cyber-pornography, women are not sexual objects, such attitudes and behaviour need to be acknowledged and addressed. In his article
Advice for Parents of Teen Porn Addicts, Jackson (2004) advocates “parental relationship can protect kids against risky behaviour” they need to give love and support, not to “shame or blame” as authoritarian behaviour does not allow for open discussion or trust (p.3; Papadpoulas, 2010, p.3). Jackson (2004) asserts regardless of the discomfort of parents they need to take the lead in talking to their children (p.3).

Ratcliffe (2017) found social media is taking a stand online. For example, Twitter vowed to crackdown further on hate-speech and sexual harassment (p.1). The policy changes were aimed at protecting women from sexual predators uploading and distributing nude pictures of them without their permission, failure to comply led to accounts being immediately, and permanently suspended (p.1). Research from Saunders (2017) suggests that as boys learn bad behaviour, this being so there is a need for role models, who have the ability to call out bad behaviour, boys learn by example, what you ignore you accept (p.1). The significance of Saunders argument is born-out by recent evidence:

In the wake of the recent allegations, concerning Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein’s systematic sexual harassment of dozens of women within the film industry Ford (2018) points out how Harvey Weinstein threatened to destroy the careers of women if they did not submit to his advances or if they spoke out against him (Ford, 2018, p.357). In May 2018, Weinstein was arrested by the NYPD and charged with multiple counts of rape, criminal sex acts, sex abuse and sexual misconduct (p.357). He has since been jailed for his offences. The torrent of chilling stories of assault and abuse from victims around the world has since stirred important conversations about why men like Weinstein feel they can get away with this behaviour, and why men who knew of his misconduct did not speak up (Saunders, 2017, p.1).

Young men and boys are subjected to enormous pressure to conform to a damaged and damaging kind of masculinity reinforced by stereotypical examples of “real men” (Saunders, 2017, p.1). These are aspects of apparently successful but deeply flawed men who have high profiles in “politics, sport, science, business and media define their success through a narrow lens of masculinity based on aggression, power, authority, promiscuity and stoicism” (p.1). This is a “toxic version of masculinity” and as Saunders’ study found failing men; women are being subjected daily to men’s domestic and sexual violence which is damaging to both men and women (p.1). More and more
women seek help from domestic violence – the survey from Australian Bureau of Statistics found that females from the age of 15 years were almost three times more likely to experience violence by a current and/or previous partner they lived with than males: 17 per cent (1.6 million compared to 6.1 per cent (547,600) (ABS, 2017, p.2). Instances of sexual harassment in 2016 alone, affected one in six women (17 per cent or 1.6 million) where one in eleven men (9 per cent or 836,700) experienced sexual harassment. Young women aged 18 to 24 years were most likely to experience sexual harassment, with around two in five (38 percent or 421,400) reporting being sexually harassed in the past twelve months (p.2). As Pease (2015) notes, if we take into consideration, as societies move towards greater levels of gender equality, some men do resort to forms of coercion and control (which may or may not include physical violence) to dominate their female partners in the home (p.1). In Pease’s words “violence against women can result from men's threatened ego, as their masculinity and sense of masculine entitlement is challenged [due to] loss of power in the public domain [by way of unemployment] they may resort to physical violence to reassert their dominance” (p.1). What does it take to stop these senseless killings of women by their partners? To date, Paul Bilby (as cited in Smiley & Lavoipierre, 2018), freelance journalist, and lecturer at Griffith University, speaks out in relation to the murdering of women by their partners during 2018, and the media’s lack of attention (p.2,). Reasons are varied, Doctor Jill Tomlison (as cited in Smiley & Lavoipierre, 2018), a researcher on Counting Dead Women project proposes: “we need to look at the problem as a whole…to some degree these attitudes amongst journalists and editors reflect broader societal attitudes – if domestic violence was seen of greater importance in our community then it would receive broader attention from either side” (p.3).

Jeffries (2018) notes in 2006 Tarana Burke, founder and director of Just Be Inc, and senior director of Girls for Gender Equity, founded the program “#Me Too Movement” (Jeffries, 2018, p.1). Its goal is to empower young women of colour living in marginalised communities, who have been sexually abused, assaulted, or exploited (p.2). These are the women who are missing from media discussions, while celebrity cases such as Harvey Weinstein, Matt Lauer, and Louis CK take precedent (p.2). Even so, the “Me Too” programme has been a platform for highlighting the magnitude of sexual abuse, and as such women from all over the world are coming forward with their own story of sexual harassment and abuse. In spite of this, there are other aspects to
take into consideration in regard to the ‘Me Too Movement’, as wonderful as the organisation may appear it has the capability to backfire significantly, through the possibility of false accusations, and vendettas, or of losing in part and momentum through over exposure.

**Christianity and the Technology of Violence**

Pagels describes there is a dark side to the Bible (Pagels, 1979, p.107). Citing scriptural authority as precedence for female subjugation Pagels notes the Bible’s decree of male supremacy has kept woman inferior to men for centuries:

> For the man is not of woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man (1 Corinthians 11:8-9).

> Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp, authority over man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression. (1 Timothy 2:11-14)

For the religious, argues Pagels (1979), “it comes as a sad fact that a human must have a penis to receive any respect or power within the Church. All women should realise that such phrases in the Bible have justified for many Christian men, not only their supremacy but reason to sexually abuse women” (p.108), the young, and children. Rossi writes “the Christian fabric of modern society contains imbedded and false text of women’s innate inferiority to man, the root of woman-hating and woman-battering today” (Rossi, 1993, p.57). In *The Legitimate abuse of Women in Christianity*, Rossi (1993) contends it is a woman’s marriage vows that affirm a “woman must submit” to her husband’s abuse; at the same time she is being manipulated into believing she is the cause of the abuse (p.57). In spite of the romance with which Protestantism seeks to mitigate Eve’s punishment the remaining presumption of her guilt sustains the myth of feminine evil. As Martin Luther concluded, the state of a woman in marriage must be ruled by her husband, the rule remains with husband as Eve has been placed under the power of her husband – the wife is compelled to obey him by God’s command. He rules the home and the state, wages wars, defends his possessions, and tills the soil (Phillips,
1984, p.105). Lowick and Taylor argue, Evangelical Christians believe the Bible is literally the word of a male God who is head of the church – man is head of the woman and she must submit to him (Lowick & Taylor, 2020, p.4). This notion is also born out in the theology of Karl Barth who bases his argument on gender equality from 1 Corinthians 11:3, “I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ; the head of every woman is her husband; and the head of Christ is the Father”, and the story of creation in Genesis 2:21-24, in which woman is taken out of man, portrays the truth of divine order. Men and women are not equal because of the order in which God had allotted them (Fiddes, 1990, p.3). For Evangelical women this requires unreserved submission, complete and final authority lies with her husband in all areas of life, thus leaving her vulnerable to domestic violence (p.4). Evangelical Christian leaders who believe in the infallibility of Biblical scripture began to blame Christian feminist for creating higher rates in divorce, sexual abuse and promiscuity (p.6). If we extend these presumptions, it could be argued that religion and domestic violence are linked: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself Saviour” (Ephesians 5:22-23).

Research from Baird and Gleeson (July 2017), shines a light on the men who are most likely to abuse their wives, defining the men as “evangelical Christians who attend church sporadically” (p.1). In their 2017 expose, Submit to your husbands: Women told to endure domestic violence in the name of God, Baird and Gleeson reiterate how “Church leaders in Australia say they abhor abuse of any kind. But advocates say the church is not just failing to address domestic violence it is both enabling, and concealing it” (p.1). Several months after their initial investigation in 2017, a further investigation commissioned by 7.30 Report and ABC News, revealed that women in Christian communities are being told to endure or forgive domestic violence, and stay in abusive relationships, often due to misappropriation of Bible verses on submission (Baird & Gleeson, November, 2017, p.1). In this follow-up report, Raped, tracked, humiliated: Clergy wives speak out about domestic violence, Baird and Gleeson (November, 2017) pointed out how women were told to endure domestic violence in the name of God (p.1). The Christian church in Australia has known for decades about “sexual violence” (p.2).
The first publication of *The Pastoral Report to the Churches on Sexual Violence Against Women and Children in the Church Community* was produced in 1990, in collaboration with the Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Churches of Christ, Uniting Church and Salvation Army. This publication stipulated that some clergymen had sexually assaulted women and their families (as well as parishioners) and it recommended bishops and administrators in religious organisations to act (Baird & Gleeson Nov., 2017, p.4-5). There is an urgent need to change this form of toxic culture one way of achieving this is through the ordination of women which will be discussed in chapter 6.

One could suggest that this dark form of pernicious behavior has travelled through the generations of humanity, residing in the collective unconscious as the Shadow archetype. In *The Legend of Lilith*, Nydle (2011) describes how the Shadow is a psychological term introduced by the late Swiss psychiatrist, Dr. Carl G. Jung (p.139). The unconscious is everything in us that is repressed, undeveloped and denied. Carl Jung observed that a person who denies their shadow is indeed a dangerous agent (p.139). Jung called for an integrated God, one that incorporated both good and evil together with the inclusion of the feminine in deity in order to manage divine omniscience (Noddings, 1993, pp.56-57). We must reconstruct a new mythology and historical perception for women’s personhood, one which is more gender inclusive, rather than through a patriarchal lens in order to conceive a new outcome for our present crisis.

**Conclusion**

The central concern of this chapter has been to illustrate how the Biblical story of creation, along with Greek mythology has brought about the demise of the Feminine Principle. We have demonstrated how neither mythology, or Orthodox scripture has affirmed a woman’s personhood, as anything pertaining to the Feminine is seen as an anathema to the patriarchs and Church Fathers. Eve, whose direct lineage harks back to the Great Mother Goddess, has been transposed onto the image of Pandora, thus further maligning the Feminine in Western eyes as a sacred entity. The myth of the Fall has been construed as divine revelation, Pandora like Eve, was blamed for all the troubles of
humanity, it is not difficult to detect the same inversion mythology as the patriarchal
gods established their supremacy in a former goddess culture. While the position in
question has implicitly shaped, or certainly contributed to our cultural assumptions
about the relationship between men and women as first Pandora, and later Eve, both of
which have been a blue-print for determining the very fabric on the nature, and destiny
of Western women. Because of Pandora, and her jar, there is still “hope” left in the
world.

The presumption is born out in the fact that a new creation mythology must be found to
restore the Feminine Principle to her rightful place alongside of the Masculine Principle,
not cast out in isolation. A new story needs to be told within the halls of academia,
women’s inferiority has been entrenched in the psyche for far too long. Myths and
realities go hand in hand: there is an urgent need to change the way people think, and
act, all of which can lead to new stories and images of the Feminine being effectively
taught within the realms of Religious Education. A way of achieving these possibilities
is to an alternate tradition that combines feminist hermanuetics alongside of traditional
theology: Public Theology provides such an example.
Chapter 5: And Her Name is Wisdom

Introduction

A significant feature throughout my thesis has been to draw attention to patriarchal epistemologies which have morally sanctioned the subordination and domination of women because of their “creational difference” (Fiorenza, 1985, p.4). Women have been both covertly devalued by virtue of being construed as little more than “God-created resources to be expropriated, and manipulated to suit the purposes of man and the institutional structures by way of which the will of man is socio-culturally entrenched” (Buchanan & Laura, 2012, p.176). One has to ask why is it that women’s sexuality is so exploited, so debased, when once it was revered? What has happened to the Divine Feminine in contemporary times? How can men come to know the deeper meaning of femininity? Why is it that sexuality is cut off from spirituality, as if they are opposites which are constantly in conflict? If we accept the place of the Feminine within Christianity, which has been tenuous at best, as the Christian Fathers viewed women as temptress, the source of evil and sin, all of which led to the gateway of the devil. This study through the previous chapters has sought to show how Male domination of religion, literature, and law, created a special symbolism and mythology about women characterized by a tri-partrate ambivalence. Woman is characterised as whore, in the case of Mary Magdalene, or the pure virgin, the kindly mother exemplified by the Virgin Mary, or as an evil, vicious, carnal hag such as the witch. On the flip side the Christian God is wholly good and wholly ‘male’, excluding the characteristics of Feminine Principle, and yet subsumes these very traits as his own. In this context, as recognition of the feminine within divinity perished, so it became possible for a persecution to arise which set new standards of ferocity, standards which were to be emulated time and again in the form of medieval heresy and the witch craze.

Biblical hermeneutics, love-poems, ancient literature, all exemplify the connection between the Feminine Principle and her association with Wisdom. On analysis, patristic scholarship has misappropriated the innate principles of the feminine by subsuming Wisdom into the logos or word of God as detailed in chapter 3. The New Testament appropriates Wisdom in the male form of Jesus Christ. With this regard the Bible and
the Church Fathers determined the role and place of women in Western society with Augustine’s theory of Original Sin, the Christian demonization of women and Nature is due in large part to the banishment of Feminine Wisdom (Long, 1992, p.159). Baring and Cashford note, “when the values of an ancient culture are overlaid and despised values do not recede into the past but rather fall into the unconscious of the race where they continue to influence the psyche” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.284). Jung and his followers understood Eve as one of a multitude of mythological representations of the Great Mother archetype. The story of Eve is the story of displacing the Great Mother Goddess.

The Deformation of Sexuality and of Women

A central concern of this chapter will be to highlight how sexuality is deemed sinful, while God is male, Lord, King and Master while staying single and good, conversely women are perceived as evil, regulated to a secondary status and set apart from man due to creational difference. Jewish society in first-century CE Palestine was one of the most conservative, male-dominated societies in the ancient world therefore women’s lives were tightly restricted and controlled. Haag notes, in Judaism women were the property of men, they were not permitted an education, while their lives almost are entirely dependent upon men (Haag, 2016, p.50; Antonelli, 2004). Josephus, a Roman-Jewish historian writing in 1st century CE summed matters up: “The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority has been given by God to the man” (Josephus, 2016, pp.50-51).

Torjeson, (1995) contends when men give women in marriage, or when younger men acquire wives through some form of payment, women’s sexuality is treated as a commodity (p.137). As discussed in Chapter 1 Wilhelm Reich (2006) and James DeMeo (2013) saw patriarchal societies as sexually repressive, producing “psychological armour” while the soft emotions are numbed and deadened (Taylor, 2018). Mary Daly (as cited in Keller, 1988) calls patriarchy a religion of reversals (Keller, 1988, p.78). In effect religion has been used to reinforce the repressive
patriarchal idea of women as valuable property of men “the necessary, but controlled vehicles for reproductive purposes” (Leeming, 2003, p.106).

The deformation of sexuality alongside that of women places sexuality and women firmly in a sinful world, in the kingdom of God sexual pleasure has no place (Kahl, 1971, p.73). In his work, *The Misery of Christianity or a Plea for Humanity without God* Kahl proffers, “there are some people on earth who castrate themselves for the sake of the kingdom of heaven”. “Some men are incapable of sexual activity from birth; some have been deliberately made so; and some there are who have freely renounced sex for the sake of God’s reign. Let him accept the teachings who can” (Matt, 19:12).

Paul was also convinced that sexuality inhibited human fulfilment, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (Corinthians 15:50), is one of the most disturbing statements in the entire New Testament (Kahl, 1971, p.73). Kahl states that Paul despised the body “it is well for a man not to touch a woman” (1Corinthians 7:1) it is better if a man remained unmarried (p.73). The Church Fathers’ also suffer from deep anxiety and repression of sexuality having an innate fear and revulsion of women. Origin (3rd century CE) was so afraid of committing a sin castrated himself as discussed in Chapter 4. The Church Fathers have a pathological aversion towards the body, seeing it as sinful and an enemy of the soul: all ties to the flesh are deemed as evil. Tertullian writes, “Woman! You are the gateway to the devil…a temple built over a sewer” (de Beauvoir, 1953, p.199). Ever faithful to Christian tradition, Tertullian put marriage in the same category “as harlotry” (Kahl, 1971, p.74). These same ideas are advocated by Saint Augustine, “We are born between faeces and urine” (de Beauvoir, 1953, p.199). Deprived of its original sacred cloak, the body, with its natural functions, suffers a loss of respect and value (Leeming, 2003, p.109). Augustine of Hippo’s view was particularly damaging as his interpretation of gender has shaped Western thinking for the last sixteen hundred years whereby Catholicism has difficulty in affirming the full dignity of women (Brakke, 2015; Armstrong, 2005; Power, 1995; Long, 1988; Ruether, 1983). Power (1995) points out how “Augustine’s interpretation of the both body, and gender, has shaped Western thinking for the last sixteen hundred years while Catholicism has difficulty in affirming the full dignity of women” p.5). Rakoeczy (2005), contends, Augustine considered women by themselves are not the full image of God but only through their husbands: *The women with her husband is the image of God*
in such a way that the whole of that substance is one image, but when she is assigned
her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she not the image of
God: whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and
completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole (Regius, 354 -430, as cited
in Rakoeczy, 2005, pp.31-32).

Medieval theology is characterized by a brutal hostility towards women (Baring, 2014,
p.4). Christian theologians such as Thomas Aquinas opined that a woman is a “failed
man” (as cited in Kahl, 1971) , she is only necessary for the continuation of the human
race: “Woman was created to help man, but only in procreation…since, in any other
work, man can be helped better by another man than by a woman” (p.81). Fellow
theologians used the story of the Fall to add moral superiority to the merely ‘natural’
(Christ &, Plaskow, 2016; Massam, 2012; Wijngaards, 1997; Noddings, 1993; Fiorenza,
1985).

He also advanced the notion that “women are impure and do not have souls” putting
women on a lower plane than men (Baring, 2014, p.4). Baring states “this belief found
its expression in the perplexing debate of the Middle-Ages, ‘Habet Mulier Animum?’
‘Does Woman have a Soul?’” (p.4). Social attitudes towards women filtered through to
the ideas of protestant theologians Luther and Calvin who stipulated a “woman is the
compliant partner of man, subject to his will in all things” (Baring, 2014, p.550).

In The Status of Women in the Thought of Karl Barth Fiddes (1990) notes, for Barth, his
theology is based on that of a covenant of relationship, contending that it was a matter of
headship basing his opinions exclusively on Corinthians 11:3, “I want you to know
that the head of every man is Christ; the head of every woman is her husband; and the
head of Christ is the Father”, and the story of creation in Genesis 2:21-24, in which
woman is taken out of man, portrays the truth of divine order. Men and women are not
equal because of the order in which God had allotted them (Fiddes, 1990, p.3). In
Goddess and God, Plaskow remarks on a paper written by her co-author Carol Christ
connecting Karl Barth’s statement that “women are ontologically subordinate to men to
deeper patterns in his thought” (Plaskow, as cited in Christ & Plaskow, 2016, p.53). At
the time Plaskow did not grasp the full implications of Christ’s argument but came to
understand that such misogynistic comments such as these could not be just cast aside
and forgotten. Her insistence that such comments “are thoroughly intertwined with
theological understandings of God and humanity led me to a far-reaching theological critique of Judaism” (p.53).

Eisler (1995) astutely notes, how could the most intimate moments that occur between a husband, and wife be so misconstrued, where a God has created a world as such that a man cannot trust a woman (p.5). The person who both through sex and birth, he has been most physically intimate with: how on earth can he trust anyone (p.5). Sexual arousal and pleasure is reconceptualised with fear, the natural bonding from sexual pleasure has been blocked and distorted (p.4). As this chapter unfolds, the reader will have an appreciation of the hostility inflicted upon women, how such fear and revulsion of the fairer sex reached its horrifying climax in the Christian witch-hunts, which saw thousands upon thousands of women being tortured, and burnt at the stake from the 13th to the 18th century (Kahl, 1971, p.81).

The Sacred Harlot - Sacred Sexuality

Should we not be concerned regarding the theological views put forward by our forefathers regarding their attitudes towards women, the body, and sexuality? Where is the moral compass in this epistemology which is built on fear and loathing for intimacy, love, joy and passion, all of which encompass the Feminine Principle. The revulsion, fear and shame of the body have filtered down through the centuries to popular imagination. However, an entirely different message occurs in the ancient love-poetry of Mesopotamia. In Origin of Prostitution in Mesopotamia, Lerner (1986b) notes, that the love-poetry and myths are rich in sexual imagery “with its joyous worship of sexuality and fertility [finding] expression in statuary and sculpture” (p.240). In Sex & Eroticism in Mesopotamia, Leik (2003) makes known “in spite of Foucault’s contention that the very concept ‘sexuality’ is an invention of the nineteenth century CE, the ambiguous nature of sexual love was well understood in the ancient and traditional societies” but was obviously subject to different cultural values (p.5). Qualls-Corbet (1988) notes, the sacred prostitute was secluded within the temple precinct, her “primary offering to the goddess was her welcoming of a stranger, thought to be an emissary of the gods, or perhaps the god incarnate, with the stranger she was awakened to her innate feminine nature of giving, receiving and containing love” (p.39; Knight &
Levine, 1989; Antonelli, 2004). Long (1992) suggests the name temple harlot, or 
_qedeshot qedeshem_ comes from the word _qudosh_, meaning ‘holy one’ (p.132). Temple 
harlots have a long and sacred history, considering their name is linked to the Goddess 
Qodsha or Kadesh, the Holy One (p.132). Children born from these holy women were 
respected there is no slur upon them (p.132). Similar practices were carried out in 
classical Greece and pre-Christian Rome (Lerner, 1986b, p.240). As noted in Chapter 2, 
this custom was not unknown to the Hebrews, appearing in the form of ‘guest 
friendship, or sex with a stranger’. Hence the focus of Deuteronomy 23:18, is the 
prohibition against the existence of prostitution: “There shall be no temple harlot among 
Israelite women, nor temple prostitute among the Israelite men. You shall not offer a 
harlot’s fee or dog’s price as any kind of votif offering in the house of the Lord, your 
God; both these things are an abomination to the Lord your God” (Deut 23:18).

Scholars, Long (1992), Leik (2003), and Jordan (2001) argue temple prostitution was a 
well established function during the time of early Church. Westenholtz (1989) notes in, 
_Tamar, Qēdēšā, Qudištu, and Sacred Prostitution in Mesopotamia_, that what is 
signified “in the scriptures, is usually a good sign of its endurance” (p.245). Perhaps this 
is why the Jewish patriarchs and Christian Fathers hated with a fervent zeal, all 
sexuality ascribed to paganism, with its moral impunities, in conjunction with the Great 
Goddess and the Feminine. Antonelli (2004) adds her voice by advocating misogyny 
and man’s sexism was an “unfortunate and all-too-widespread part of Jewish sociology 

The origin of prostitution has its source in temple prostitution, Lerner distinguishes 
between “cultic sexual service and prostitution or commercial prostitution” (Lerner, 
1986b, p.238). Modern scholars have confused the issue by referring to the temple 
prostitutes as ‘hierodule’ without separating various types of women engaging in 
commercial or cultic prostitution (p. 239). Men and women who practiced cultic sexual 
services may date back to the Neolithic Age and to various cults of the Mother Goddess 
or the so called Great Goddess in her many manifestations (p.238). Lerner states we 
have ample evidence from “historical, literary, linguistic, pictorial, legal all of which we 
can reconstruct the worship of female goddesses, together with the lives and activities 
of the priestesses from Ancient Mesopotamia and the Neo-Babylonian period” (Lerner, 
1986b, p.238) Cojocaru adds “we have records of this feminine presence found in the
graves of the queens from the Royal Cemetery of Ur, leaving us oblivious to the actual roles they would have played” (Cojocaru, 2011, p.11). The term ‘sacred prostitute’ states Qualls-Corbett, (1988) presents a paradox to our logical minds (p.143). While Westenholtz (1989) suspects that sacred prostitution, is an amalgam of misconceptions, presumptions, and inaccuracies (p.263). Qualls-Corbett (1988) continues while “we are disinclined to associate that which is sexual as a consecration to the gods, the significance of the temple priestess escapes us as we remain disconnected to the image that represents the full-bodied vital essence of the feminine” (p.14). The premise here has sought to demonstrate the manner in which the temple priestess embodied the spiritual, along with the erotic attributes of the Divine Feminine (p.143) and by definition mediated between the divine and humanity (p.150). While defying male theological misogyny, the fact that intercourse with her was a transformation through the mystery of sex, which paralleled the mystery of religious teachings: “The flesh and the spirit were united, each supporting the other...the most important ritual that of the hieros gamos, was the embodiment of goddess’s fertile womb by the sacred prostitute” (p.39).

The hieros gamos was the ritual marriage that was celebrated between the Goddess and her Divine son/spouse as noted in chapter 1. There is a long history attached to the celebratory-ritual-marriage custom that guaranteed the fertility of land and its peoples while honouring the sacred feminine, and her fertility needed for survival (Lerner, 1986b, Matthews, 2002b, Baring & Cashford, 1991, Eisler, 1998; Stukey, 2001; Devlin-Glass, 2001). In Babylon, Mesopotamia and Israel it was the high priestess and priest who stood in place of the Goddess and God enacting out this sacred ritual (Long, 1992, Jordan, 2001, Leik, 2003). Leik (2003) opines that in Mesopotamian literature it is the woman’s voice that dominates the poetic discourse, “she speaks her desire and demands gratification for her sexual needs” (p.63). The paradigmatic figure in the majority of the text is the Goddess Inanna, who is identified with eroticism and sensuality: she is the most feminine of goddesses (p.58, p.63). In Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, & the Politics of the Body, Eisler (1998) notes “Inanna’s love poetry is overtly sexual” (pp.67-71), here she is asking the young pastoral-king-god into her marriage bed: “My vulva, the horn, the Boat of Heaven, is full of eagerness like the young moon. Who will plough my vulva? Who will plough my high field? Who will plough my wet ground? “Great
Lady” Dumuzi answers, “the king will plough your vulva, I Dumuzi the king will plough your vulva” (Leik, 2003, p.69; Lerner, 1986b, p.240).

In The Epic of Gilgamesh, (written around 2,000 BE), it is through the feminine characters that the young king of Urak, Gilgamesh, and his companion Enkidu achieve both knowledge and wisdom (Cojocaru, 2011, p.3; Lerner, 1986b, p.245; Bailey, 1970, p.139). In her article The Feminine Principle in the Initiation of Gilgamesh – Kingship & Knowledge, Cojocaru points out that Urak is a strongly patriarchal society, but divine kingship is always accompanied by the shadow of the Feminine Principle (Cojocaru, 2011, pp. 8-11). Lerner’s research suggests Gilgamesh may have actually lived at the beginning of the third millennium BCE, as the epic has survived in several versions, the most complete being the Akkadian version, apparently based on the earlier Sumerian tales written during the first millennium BCE (Lerner, 1986b, p.245). In the poem, the sacred prostitute is introduced for a specific purpose, as Enkidu’s teacher, companion and initiator she instills in him the qualities of a divinity through sexual experience (Cojocaru, 2011, p.1; Bailey, 1970, p.138; Lerner, 1986b, p.246).

Bailey (1970) in Woman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2-3, states “we have two accounts of the harlot (sacred prostitute), and Enkidu, the Old Babylonian (11.ii.3-iii, 36), dating from about 1,800, and Assyrian (1.iv.6-vi, 30), to be dated about six or seven centuries later” (p.137). In the Old Babylonian version, the sacred harlot and Enkidu cohabit for six days and seven nights, whereupon the harlot says to him (11.ii.11) “Enkidu, thou art become like a god”. She recognises that sexual experience has endowed Enkidu with the quality of divinity: “But now he had [wi]sdom, [br]oader understanding (1.iv.23-29)” (p.138). Bailey contends the sacred prostitute is “something of a wise-woman and seer [she] is the only woman sexually involved with either Enkidu or Gilgamesh in the epic” (p.142). It is through sexual experience that Enkidu is no longer the wild man who cohabited with animals, the harlot acting as the agent of change leads Enkidu to civilisation which is both gain and a loss (Cojocaru, 2011, p.11; Bailey, 1970: Lerner, 1986). As previously argued the patriarchs and later Church Fathers had little tolerance to any other theological perspective other than their own patriarchal bias and narrow views together with an all consuming fear of sexuality. A completely different perspective towards sin is celebrated at Urak during the yearly Akitu or New Year festival, here the heiros gamos is performed (Cojocaru, 2011, p.8). Through the divine
The act of sexual union “the human community is ‘forgiven all of their sins’, reanimates the divine marriage of the city gods (in Urak, where it is attested from ancestral times, the ritual represents the union between Inanna and Dumuzi)” (p.8).

The Sacred Marriage ritual, states Lerner (1986b), was carried out in the temples for various fertility goddesses for nearly two thousand years (p.240). Within the context of Mesopotamian fertility religion, it is understandable that sexual occurrences would have been considered the agency of initiation into civilization (Bailey, 1970, p.147). But, as Bailey points out, in the context of Jewish religion which rejects fertility as the grounds of existence, either human or divine, “there is no place for such an initiation” (p.147).

The god of the Hebrews is a distant god, he shares his powers with no female divinity nor was he a husband or lover of any kind, there is no longer joy in sexual union as in the traditions which surround Israel, no love or ecstasy, lovemaking is purely for reproductive purposes. There is no longer a partnership between the Goddess and her Son/God/Lover social norms are constructed by a male dominated culture which assumes male standards and values as normative, women are regarded by the patriarchs and later Church Fathers as lacking full moral control. In essence, woman’s worth as a person and female traditions are subordinated and wiped out. On this basis J, as the priestly author of Genesis, altered the creation story of Adam and Eve to ascribe with the present [patriarchal based] traditions as he knew them (p.147). Graves and Patai’s study (1965), The Hebrew Myths: the Book of Genesis, draws attention to the punishment of Eve by the Hebrew God, for initiating Adam into the arts of love (p.79). Eve is the ‘Mother of all Living’: her original godhead is disguised by the misogyny of the patriarchs, giving cause to her unnatural birth from Adam’s rib (p.79). The authors agree “the original title belonged to the Love Goddess Aruru or Inanna/Ishtar” (p.79).

Here Eve confers Wisdom upon Adam, initiating him through the arts of love just as Aruru’s priestess did upon Enkidu. Knowledge, wisdom, guidance and kingship are conferred onto male figures by sacred feminine characters. In this sense, the reciprocity of Mesopotamian thinking is reflected by this shadow of the Feminine Principle that constantly follows the concept of kingship, an exclusively masculine attribute (Cojocaru, 2011, pp.4, 9).
From Seer to Witch and the Wise-Women in Between

This section of the thesis points to the double gesture adopted by patriarchy which acknowledges women where applicable on the one hand, while vilifying them on the other. Mythology, history and ancient text acknowledge women for their wisdom, foresight and prophecy. Patriarchy’s over-riding fear, fanaticism, or jealousy comes to the fore in the situation of Hypatia and Jezebel. However, a more egalitarian stance is held within the Celtic Tradition whereby women are accepted as having the power of prophecy, foresight, and guardianship as in the Irish banshee who is not characterised as evil by clergy (Lysaght, 1986).

The origins regarding the site of the Delphic Oracle are shrouded in history and predate the cult of the Greek god Apollo (Young, 1994, Markale, 1999). In the Homeric Hymn to Pythian Apollo, Young points out that there is a gender conflict taking place between Apollo, and his conquest of the indigenous female deity at Delphi (Young, 1994, p.147). Believed to be semi-divine in nature, the ‘Sibyl’, from the Greek word sibylla, means prophetess or “the one who sees” (p.147). The prophetic authority of the Sybil’s lasted for more than five hundred years, until the young god Apollo came from the north and murdered the sacred serpent (p.148). Intriguingly, the Pythia, or Delphic oracle, had to be a woman, but her ecstatic utterances are interpreted by male priests (p.148). Drawing the reader’s attention to the evidence that has been gathered hereof all of women’s history is lost in the patriarchal palimpsest which has erased, reinterpreted and rewritten over what once was. Surprisingly, both Plato and Plutarch (as cited in Richter, 2001) spoke of the oracle with genuine religious respect, Bate (1918) in The Sibylline Oracles, writes “the Sibylline tradition took its origin from a side-stream of oracular inspiration, the Cassandra of the Agamemnon is just such a figure, she corresponds closely to the earliest description of a Sibyl, found in a fragment of Heraclitus; her utterance is wild, harsh and uncouth: her message is full of unwelcome truths and forebodings of disaster” (p.8).

The Cumae Sybil is the reported source for the Roman Sibylline Books (Young, 1994, p.162; Bate, 1918, p.11). Research from Young and Bate show how the books became the source of the state oracle of Rome and as such shaped much of not only Roman political life but also Roman religious life (Young, 1994, pp.162-166; Bate, 1918, p.11).
Bate contends it was the Jews of Alexandria who were the first after Berosus to adopt, adapt, and amplify the Sibylline oracles for the purpose of their own religion (Bate, 1918, p.28). He continues his narrative by stating “the Sibyllines illustrate the prevailing tendency of Hellenistic Judaism to substitute periphrases and synonyms for the Divine Name over and against the moral defilements of heathenism and its sexual laxity in particular – the Jewish prophets were intense in their hatred of paganism” (p.28).

From about 160BC to the end of the 1st century CE, the Jews sought after the services of the oracles, nor did they entirely cease to use them till two centuries later (Bate, p.18). In the third and second century BC the Judaism of the Dispersion found itself in close and diverse contact with Hellenism (p.18). Again and again the Jews turn to the proclamation of monotheism while denouncing idolatry (p.28).

Although the roots of the Sibyl are found in paganism, the Sibyl is adopted, and adapted by Christian apologists in the first century CE, with Christian writers retouching, and adding to the Sybilline literature (Bate, 1918, p.32). To Clement of Alexandria the Sibyl is a prophetess, divinely taught “one of our own poets she sang on God’s behest” (Bate, 1918, p.33). Origen, however, does not follow Clement in quoting the Sibyl herself (p.33) In the West the history of eschatological doctrine and apocalyptic literature took a different course, and the longer survival of the Sibyl among the Latin communities is only one instance of the general divergence. Tertullian follows the Greek apologists in giving a high place to the Sibyl. She is older than all the literature: her evidence is “the testimonia divinarum”. Augustine’s reference to the Sibyl is taken directly from the Divine Institutes, he does not rank the Sibyl with any prophets of the Church, nor does he attribute any authority of her own, yet the name of Augustine and the quotations of Lactantius 250-325CE, sufficed to sustain the reputation of the Sibyl in Latin Christianity (Bate, 1918, p.36). It is interesting to note that when it serves male expediency, the Church Fathers do not hesitate to utilise the wisdom of the oracle and the Feminine Principle while in the same breath deny women their own nature through a litany of prejudices and postures. The tradition of the oracle continued through to the Middle-Ages, lasting to the 19th century, even though the books were forgeries (p.36). Women have been regarded in many cultures as being wise, insightful and powerful however this power comes with a double-edged sword, as that power is regarded as evil
by the Church Fathers. This section provides an overview of the variety of manifestation of this power and salient Christian responses to it.

Guyonvarc’H (2002) describes how all cultures have their own words for sharing the workings of visionaries, and seers (p.40). Like the Greek Moirea, (Monaghan, 1993, p.240) the Norns of Norse mythology are ambiguous female figures who establish laws along with the controlling the fate of humans and gods alike (Young, 1994, p.195). The Voïlospá, states Young, are taken from the Poetic Edda, their name means “soothsaying or prophecy of the voïla” (p.195). They are women who possess secret knowledge of the past and future, like the Pythia the oracle is a shaman-like figure who sits on a platform, while spells are sung, she goes into a trance-state predicting the future (p.196).

The Celtic traditions use words and images relating to sight, visions and prophecy, and as such the Irish myths present some examples of “imbas forasnai”, or the use of prophesy, in the outcome of the Táin Bó Cuailnge from the Book of Leinster written between the 13th and 14th century (Kinsella, 1970, p. viiii; Monaghan, 1993, p.308).

It is the women in Irish mythology who are portrayed strongly in this warrior-centred culture, having the power of prophecy and foresight (Lysaght, 1986, pp.205-207). An example of this features in The Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh, which is the primary Irish mythological narrative; the divinity in question here is the Mórrighan (Great Queen), or Goddess of War who prophesied the end of the world, “predicting all the evil that would happen, every sickness, and every vengeance” (Guyonvarc’H, 2002, p.40).

In DaChoca’s Hostel, the Mórríghan manifests as a sorceress and as a foreboding washer-woman (Lysaght, 1986, p.199). Her foreboding appearance, clothing, and long dishevelled hair, associates her with the Banshee, or Irish death-messenger (p.89). Moreover, the Banshee is a supernatural, anthropomorphic woman, who bears a relationship with the Mórrighan, she has the same contradictory characteristics, at times beautiful or ugly, solitary in character, with long hair dressed in grey, white or red, the colours of death (pp.89-90). Lysaght states the death-messenger tradition is orientated towards the interest of the whole community as she forfills important needs of those who share in her belief (p.150). She is a dying person’s ‘guardian angel’, wailing close to the house, warning those of imminent death to the departing soul (p.47). Another contributing polemic is the clergy did not convey any hostility towards folk beliefs, and as Lysaght suggests, “there is no mention of the badhb or banshee in any sermons”
One could argue that the banshee is almost an Irish national symbol (p.135) as there is anecdotal evidence to show that during the Irish uprising of 1916, the Banshee’s wailing was overheard and recognised.

In *An Anthology of Sacred Text by and about Women*, Young (1994) argues “the subject of women has been greatly distorted through the editorial lens of history which has been relegated largely by men” (Young, 1994, p.2). Our purpose here has been to identify how through history, and literature, the wisdom of the Feminine Principle has been trampled upon, made a mockery of, and over-ridden by patriarchal argumentation and obsessive, fanatical zeal. An exemplum of this attitude occurred in 415CE in the city of Alexandria, where a great tragedy occurred. Toohey notes, “Hypatia was born in a time when attitudes towards women were deeply influenced by the misogyny of Aristotelian philosophy” (Toohey, 2003, p.1). Her father’s attitude to women and education allowed her “to rise above this misogyny and become one of the most educated and influential people of her time” (p.1). Research from Waithe, Jordan and Young shows how Hypatia became the foremost commentator on the work of Ptolemy Claudius, and almost eleven centuries later her dissertations were taken up by Copernicus (Waithe, 1987; Jordan, 2001; Young, 1994). Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria was absolutely fanatical in his pursuit of so-called heretics. According to Socrates Scholasticus, a friend of Hypatia, the Bishop of Alexandria apparently hired and inspired a group of Nitrian monks who:

> pull her out of her chariot: they hail her into the Church called Ceasarium: they strip her stark naked: they raze the skin and rend the flesh of her body with sharp shells, until the breath departed out of her body: they quarter her body: they bring her quarters unto a place called Cinaron and burn them to ashes (Young, 1994, p.177).

Young states even the Church Father Socrates Scholasticus, (b.379 CE), of Constantinople, when outlining this story in his *Ecclesiastica Historia* (VII.15), “is appalled by the wanton death of such an honoured woman” (Socrates Scholasticus, 1994, p.177). Similar fanatical zeal was enforced by Elijah in his conflicts with Jezebel as discussed in chapter 2. This zealous attitude towards the fear and hostility towards women, which included anything outside of their scope of understanding, was viewed with hostility and menace. Toohey augments these considerations by writing “Christians, (or at least those in power), perceived Neoplatonism as a religious rival and
therefore something to be destroyed” (Toohey, 2003, p.2). Hypatia lived in an era where scientific enquiry was seen as antithetical to religious dogma and her death was seen by her supporters, as Toohey proffers “the last candle to free inquiry to be snuffed out before the long night of clerical scholasticism” (Toohey, 2003, p.4).

Even though their voices have been subdued, and their writings shaded over and scraped away, only to be recast in the mould of patriarchal epistemology, philosophical aspirations have been achieved by women in the ancient world. Not only was Diotima a philosopher, she is Socrate’s teacher “regarding the nature of love” (Young, 1994, p.156). In Plato’s *Symposium* (429-347BCE), Young states “Socrates is Plato’s teacher and spokesperson, [he] describes a conversation he had with the philosopher Diotima, the topic is on the nature of love, which Socrates had been debating with Agathon” (p.156). Through meticulous questioning and careful explanation Diotema “leads Socrates to understand that love, through its pursuit of wisdom and beauty, can be elevated from the particular to the universal or from concrete to abstract” (p.156). According to Young, not only did Diotema teach Socrates about the nature of love, she also taught him the so-called “Socratic Method of teaching by asking questions” (p.156), a fact often not taught when Socratic reasoning is discussed.

The work of Patricia Mills (1987) tells us that the image of the sorcerer in Classical literature is almost uniformly dark: Circe is the seductress, since her desirability changes men into animals, while they still have the human capacity of understanding (Husain, 1998; Yarnell (1994); Medea is painted as a murderess, she is described as an outsider, dark, and enigmatic, a woman who is skilled in the arts of magic and witchcraft (Hussain, 1998, p.xii). Research from Yarnell (1994), Denike (2003), and Levack (2004), note that identification of women, as witches, was a standard practice dating back to ancient Greece and Rome. This is not always the case however, which becomes apparent as this chapter unfolds. Aristotle believed in the superiority of the male, similarly other ancient male scholars reflected the same views as Aristotle: Cato, Cicero, and Seneca also held males as being superior to women. In his review describing the works of Ovid’s *Dipsias*: Apuleius’ *Oenothea*, along with the works of Horace, who focuses primarily on the witches Canidia and Sagana, Russell (1985) describes both nature and appearance of the witches: they having pale hideous faces, naked feet, and dishevelled hair, their clothing is rotting shrouds, the pair “meet at night
in lonely places to claw the soil with their taloned fingers, rip apart a black lamb, and eat its flesh, and invoke the gods of the underworld” (Russell, 1985, p.31). An interesting point is that the festival of Dionysus became a blueprint for the rites allegedly practiced by the medieval witches. This literary tradition of evil sorceress readily supported the later Hebrew-Christian image of the witch (p.31).

The Sumerians and Babylonians invented an elaborate form of demonology believing the world was full of spirits and most of them hostile (Russell, 1985, p.29). Russell contends “among the most terrible Sumerian demons is Ardat Lili or Lilitu, a cousin of the Graeco-Roman Lamia and the prototype of the Hebrew Lilith (p.29). Lilith is the female demonic figure in Hebrew folklore. She represents the most powerful archetype of evil, as a chthonic, terrifying, ever-present figure, bringing death to children, and sexual night terrors to men (Jones, 1995, pp.272-273; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Stukey, 2001; Antonelli, 2004). In rabbinic literature Lilith is identified as Adam’s first wife implied in Genesis1:27, she refused to be subservient to her husband, since “she would not agree to her proper place” thus leaving the Garden of Eden (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.511). God sent three angels to request her return but she rebuffed them, conversely Eve replaced Lilith thus ensuring her subordination to Adam and placed last within creation. Hebrew text typify the notion of evil attributing female representation as the source of corruption. In the Zohar Lilith is called “the ruin of the world”: the Old Testament ties Lilith and Eve to women as the source of all evil: “they adorn their heads and faces, are more susceptible to fornicate, while laying plots in the hearts of men. “Of the woman came the beginning of sin. And through her we shall die” (Sir.25:24).

Enshrined in Hebrew text and legends are the beliefs that woman, as in Eve, is responsible for the expulsion of humanity from the Garden of Eden. This idea became the justification for making Jewish women responsible to their fathers, as well as their husbands while removing even the smallest degree of sexual, social, political, and religious autonomy that belonged to women of the neighbouring cultures (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.513; Antonelli, 2004). Jones notes tradition also tied Lilith to the devil, her cult survived amongst the Jews till the 7th century”, and sometime later she was absorbed into medieval folklore (Jones, 1975, p.273; Knight & Levine, 1989; Stukey, 2001; Antonelli, 2004). Not only did Lilith appear in apocryphal and orthodox literature, her imagery was employed in the identification of thousands of women being
accused of copulating with demons, killing children and seducing men: all of which could be summed up in a word ‘witches’ (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.512).

Augustine espoused that pagan religion, sorcery, and magic were all invented by the Devil for the purpose of luring people away from Christian truth (Levack, 2004, p.25; Baroja, 1964, Denike, 2003). Russell (1985) found the most important legal document of the early Middle Ages relating to witchcraft is the “Canon Episcopi”, issued about 900 CE, originally attributed to Augustine, “it was incorrectly believed to have been dated back to the fourth century condemning those who were weak of faith and dismissed the physical reality of witchcraft, thus forestalling the witch-craze” (p.54; Baroja, 1964; Denike, 2003). Later, the canon lawyers and theologians had to manipulate the writings of the canon to match their new fundamentalist views on witchcraft (Russell, 1985; Baroja, 1964; Denike, 2003). Elements taken from Greek and Roman mythology, the Norse Eddas, also Celtic-Teutonic traditions merge, hence transferring all superstitions onto witches (Russell, 1985; Denike, 2003; Baroja, 1964; Levack, 2004). Central to the tenets of the Canon Episcopi was that it helped to institute the historical concept of the sabot, establishing the Greek Goddess Diana as chief of the demon horde, leading the Wild Hunt, and thus equating her with Satan (Russell, 1985, p.54; Baroja, 1964, Denike, 2003). The Canon Episcopi (c.900) was the most important ecclesiastical document of the Middle Ages defining witchcraft as devil-worship (Guiley, 1989, p.52). In this way the canon provided an account for “the women who follow [Diana] obeyed the Lady Goddess (domina), rather than Lord Christ (dominus) (Russell, 1985, p.54). Witches convened at a sabot, a secret night-time activity characterised by obscene behaviour (Guiley, 1989, p.287). Guiley notes the origins of the sabot seem to be “a blend of pagan rites, still in existence, most notably the great Druidic festivals of Beltane (celebrated April 30) and Samhain (observed October 31) and the well-established idea that heretics held obscene rites (p.287). The sabot became more prominent in continental Europe during the witch-hunts with the idea that the devil presided over such events (p.287). The Wild Hunt has its roots in Celtic and Germanic folklore. However, various medieval versions attribute the pagan goddesses-turned-devils (by Christianity) Diana, Holda, Herodias, Hecate and Berchta leading the ghostly train through the sky on their phantom horses, accompanied by their spectral hounds shrieking and shouting (p.366). Women according to the Canon, are not only “mere pagans” and porn’s of the devil but are “entirely different creatures” (Denike,
In 6 June 829CE, the Synod of Paris augments for the legal status of sorcery as outlined in Leviticus 20:6; and Exodus 22:18, arguing for the Biblical decree: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Exodus 22:18).

A century later states Russell (1985), the German, canon lawyer Burchard of Worms from 1008 to 1025, in his famous Decretales equated Diana of the Canon with Holda, whom he called “the witch Holda” (p.54, Baroja, 1964). The Classical goddess Dianna, whose aspect presents now with the Teutonic Mother Goddess Holda, is considered to be a manifestation of Satan (Russel, 1985, p.54). Patriarchal hysteria successfully reduces the Feminine Principle to its lowest form of expression, Holda the once revered Mother Goddess is now degraded and cursed. Evidence now identifies Holda as a witch, albeit with the image of the women who follow her out into the night, created a picture from which the later witch-craze would extensively draw upon (p.54). Denike (2003), in her article The Devil’s Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate writes, the Canon Episcopi “finds the devil embroiled in pagan practice, but the real evil lies in the delusional trickery that has fooled ‘many followers’ to believe in the ‘lie’ of Diana” (p.27). The double gesture of this accusation is to acknowledge, yet repudiate the power, and presence of a Mother Goddess, while mocking her very existence as the trickery of “the evil One” (p.27). The canon identifies the Feminine Principle as being suspended between her power and persuasion, on the one hand, and her weak-minded tendency to be fooled by the devil’s seductive illusions, on the other (p.27). Denike notes:

_The movement and exchange between the competing representations of power and powerless, between truth and falsehood, or true danger and mere delusion, especially around the icon of fertility, is a basic feature of patriarchies jurisdictional struggles. The basic feature of the ecclesiastical and judicial demonological discourses that proliferated during the witch hunts (p.27)._ 

War produced more single women, demographic changes and famine, all of which led to women living without the patriarchal support of a father or husband and thus becoming easy targets (Russell, 1985, p.115; Brakke, 2015, p.152; Hughes, 1970, p.168). Lonely woman were not free of suspicion, accused of having ‘the evil eye’, muttering or loitering alluded to the casting of a spell. Unruly or wilful comes to mean wicked, while midwives are open to suspicion albeit accusations from a husband whose
wife and child may have died in childbirth: witchcraft and heresy went hand in hand together (Russell, 1985, p.115; Brakke, 2015, Hughes; 1970).

Baroja (1964), in his *The World of the Witches*, draws on ancient literature, narrative from Classical Greece, together with Roman art as evidence for the nature of the witch. He sums up his research by stating “the female practice of witchcraft is due to “anxiety” and women’s failure at “being [a] women” (p.256). Baroja’s ideas are viewed through a patriarchal lens in the sense that women’s failures are caused by:

> frustrated or illegitimate love affairs [that] have left her with a sense of impotence or disgrace. This in turn drives her to use improper means to achieve her ends, although this does not always involve the work of the devil in the Christian sense of the word. Her situation changes as she grows older, and no longer has any strong sensual desires (p.256).

In this sense, Baroja’s ideas conform to the institutional patriarchal ideas regarding women, specifically in terms of her gender, sexuality, morality and her propensity for corruption. Baroja cites the works of Homer, Ovid, Lucan, and also Horace, as his evidence in relation to witchcraft and women, he does not reference archaeological evidence in consideration of his argument. The ancient literature is written by men about women, in view of the fact that it is a projection of their own fears, frustration and failures projected onto women. The Classical world was notoriously misogynistic as evidenced throughout this thesis. The Great Magical Papyri stands as an exemplum which negates the argument of Baroja. In his work *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Luck (1985) stipulates men were largely the only recipients of an education in antiquity and as the Magical Papyri or *(PGM)* verifies it was men who were the writers and practitioners of magic and demonology (pp.15-20).

In later centuries repression of the Feminine Principle produced a new height in the contempt against women. Written as scholarship by Kramer and Sprenger, and observed by Catholic communities generally, the *Malleus Malificarum*, constituted a 1486 guide for finding witches (Hughes, 1970, p.183). Later James the First’s *Demonologie*, became the official guide in Protestant England (p.183). Taking their lead from the patriarchs and Church Fathers, the work of Kramer and Sprenger exudes vitriolic hatred of women. Their content relies heavily on Biblical text concentrating predominantly on
the myth of the ‘Fall’, citing Eve and the Virgin Mary as an exemplum of what was
good and evil in a woman (Kramer & Sprenger, 1928, p.1). The sexism of the monks is
unmistakable: “Women by their very natures are inferior…[are]…more susceptible to
the devil just by their very natures being the fragile sex…[they are]…defective, having
minds just like children; and most of all quicker to waver in faith than a man” (p.1).

Their arguments against women are repetitive and contradictory: in some instances one
could even call their text medieval porn, as both men have a perverted interest in how
women are visited, and ultimately “copulate with devils…all witchcraft came from
carnal lust, which in women is insatiable” (Kramer & Sprenger, 1928, p.1). Endorsed
and recommended by Pope Innocent VIII, 1484CE, this heinous book is used by the
accuser to put words into the mouths of the accused. Daley notes in Gyn/Ecology: the
Metaethics of Radical Feminism, the statements are similar throughout Europe, albeit
the text justified the rape and torture of innocent women (Daley, 1978, p.188). The
Papal Bull of Innocent refers to both sexes, yet it is the women who suffer the terrible
penalties (pp.188-189). Rape is not recognised as torture, and yet rape is the most
horrid of crimes perpetrated against women. As the ultimate tool in degradation, rape
represents a crime of domination, subjugation, and contempt: a form of ‘bestial power’
imposed by a male (p.198). In his work Witchcraft, Hughes (1970) writes of the Malleus
Maleficarum, as defying all the laws of evidence, while presuming guilt, and advocating
torture, thus providing a weapon to send thousands women to a withering death, of
whom only a few were perhaps guilty (p. 180). Denike (2003) notes the persecution and
torture of women by clerics and patristic scholarship branded them as “medieval
terrorists” (p.11).

Women were publically stripped in front of their children and neighbours. Removal of
both hair and pubic hair is significant in the search for marks of the ‘devil humiliation’
(Daley, 1978, p.196). Shiritz (2013) notes the clitoris is identified as a ‘devils teat’,
through which the devil sucked out his victim’s soul (p.251). Since every woman has a
clitoris, by default she is branded a witch by this perverse clerical mentality. Daley
(1978) contends the implication of psychological torture still resides in the collective
memory as mothers and daughters are used as witnesses against each other (p.196). She
adds, for a daughter to watch her mother die was horrific, but “to remember all her life
that she had committed her mother to the flames, that in effect she had committed
matricide would have been a burden of unimaginable guilt and self-loathing” (p.197). Together, both men and Church obliterated the sacredness of the Mother symbol and all she stood for, naming their persecuting institution as ‘Mother Church’ (p.199). Wijngaards (2015) notes, the *Malleus Malificarum* is publically honoured, and widely quoted as a text book by theologians for centuries to come (p.4). Above all the *Malleus Malificarum* was a dark evil jewel that extinguished the light on the lives of medieval, and early modern women, like the Bible and stories from folk-lore, the text impacted greatly upon humanity (Demos, 2009, pp.62-70; Durschmied, 2005). The evidence from Russell, Brakke and Hughes suggests the witch-craze and women are seen together as a sociological and theological construct, since the 16th century is considered to have been unusually misogynistic (Russell, 1985, p.115; Brakke, 2015, p.151; Hughes, 1970, p.168). Outside of the witch-hunts, medieval heresy included the Cathar and Wadensian heterodoxy where heretics are also tortured and burnt at the stake, but we have not the scope here to discuss those events in detail.

In more modern times states Daley (1978), the semantics of ‘good and evil’ has been replaced partially by ‘health’ and ‘mental illness’ (p.64). In our times, “a woman who is defined as unhealthy, because she wants power over her own life can’t win according to the rules of the psychiatrist’s games” (p.64). Women, particularly, although of course not exclusively, are victimised by the barbarities of modern psychiatry, especially psycho-surgery, which interestingly, is contemporaneous with the second wave of feminism (p.65). Dr Roberts (as cited in Daly, 1978), a feminist, observes that psychosocial conditioning is no longer as effective as it once was in suppressing female anger (Daley, 1978, p.65). According to Daley (1978):

> The weapons that modern technology is developing for social control of deviants, particularly women, are more subtle than burning at the stake. They merely destroy minds – the capacity for creativity, imagination and rebellion – while leaving hands and uteri intact to perform the services of manual work and breeding (p.65).

The “Age of Reason for men heralded the ages of extermination for female genocide”, a deeply misogynist campaign launched by church and state during man’s ‘renaissance’, which relied on the demonisation, and self legitimising war on women’s sexuality (Denike, 2003, p.14).
The Wisdom of the Serpent

Found throughout the ancient world, Serpent symbolism predates patriarchy and is associated with wisdom and prophecy. The serpent transforms the symbolic wisdom found within the mysteries of death, and rebirth, through the shedding of its skin (Keller, 1988, pp.52-53, Eisler, 1988, Phillips, 1984, Campbell, 1988). Research from Keller, (1988), Eisler, (1988), and Campbell (1988) note serpents are an integral aspect of the worship of the Goddess representing immortality, and fertility. Phillips (2000) gives an account in the Gilgamesh Epic, (tablet XCI; ANET, 96), how it is the serpent who is responsible for the hero Gilgamesh to lose his chance of immortality. Serpents are guardians of thresholds, sometimes acting as the Goddesses’ consort, while at other times representing the embodiment, or relationship to the character of the feminine as in Gaea, Great Goddess of the Greeks, and Lilith, Medea and also Eve. Gaea gives birth to serpents, Lilith is quite often illustrated as a serpent; Medea is accompanied by serpents, while Eve acquires wisdom through affiliation with the serpent as in the Genesis story. It would appear that the great Goddess Tiamat’ name in Arabic, and Aramaic is related to hawwāh meaning “serpent” (Phillips, 1984, p.41). According to their study, The Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis Graves and Patai (1965) state, Eve as the ‘Mother of all Living’ has her original godhead disguised, as the Hebrew patriarchs designated her origin from Adam’s rib (p.79). As previously noted Zues gave birth to the Goddess Athena (a woman denying goddess) from his head. Graves and Patai note the original title ‘Mother of all Living’ belonged to the Love Goddess Aruru or Ishtar, “Eve confers wisdom upon Adam just as Aruru’s priestess did on Enkidu” (p.79). The Babylonian legend of Marduk, as Creator God, had centuries before usurped the Sumerian legend of Aruru as Creatrix, Graves and Patai contend “the Hebrew Creator has similarly punished Eve for initiating Adam into the arts of love (p.79).

Why did the serpent approach the woman rather than the man? Bailey (1970) cites seven articles as evidence pointing out that the serpent’s approach to Eve was of a sexual nature, there is no specific mention of sexual intercourse on the part of Eve and Adam until after they have eaten the fruit (p.145). In Genesis, Bailey notes, “the woman, looking at the tree of knowledge of good and evil, says (3:6) that it was desired to make one wise, and both the serpent (3:5) and Yahweh (3:22) say that the tree’s fruit makes its eater like the gods” (p.145). The Gilgamesh Epic offers a parallel perspective
pointing in a similar direction (p.145). After the harlot has seduced Enkidu, she says to him (1.iv.34), “Thou art [wi]se Enkidu, art become like a god!” (p.145). Genesis combines the scene of eating, a garden where trees and water play a major role in fertility, all lends itself to an interpretation of the forbidden fruit in terms of sexuality, while it could be also argued that at times, Eve herself is seen as the forbidden fruit (Bailey, 1970, p.145; Phillips, 1984, p.41; (Ruiz, 2001; Spong, 1992). Phillips (2000) notes when describing the serpent with the gaining of wisdom, that wisdom also comes with a heavy burden of shame when Adam and Eve realised they are naked (Genesis 3:7) (p.241). The serpent, once described as the wisest of creatures God had made was now cursed, and looked upon as the source of death: “So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died” (Numbers 21:6).

In *Adam and Eve and the Serpent in Genesis 1-3* Pagels (1988) notes, that Gnostic myths are traced to a single scriptural source: Genesis 1-3 (p.57). Orthodox Christians, especially such anti-Gnostic writers as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement all approach Genesis 1-3 “essentially as a history with a moral” (p.57). They treat Adam and Eve as actual and specific historical persons, the esteemed ancestors of our species (p.57). Gnostic Christians, on the other hand read the Adam and Eve story as “myth with a meaning” (p.57). The important point of Pagels’ argument is Gnostic Christians venerate the Feminine Principle associating Eve and the Serpent with Wisdom. In her book *Adam, Eve & the Serpent*, Pagels contends “the most radical Gnostics turned the story upside down and told it from the serpent’s point of view – some say he was a manifestation of Christ himself” (Pagels, 1979, p.xxv). Hoeller (1997) identifies the *Apocaphon of John* as pointing to Eve, who acts as Adam’s awakener, stating that “nowhere is her superiority and numinous power more evident” (p.3). The Gnostics rendering has the spiritual principle as Eve emerging from the unconscious depths of the sleeping Adam. As she emerges her liberating calls wakes the sleeping Adam:

*I entered into the midst of the dungeon which is the prison of the body. And I spoke thus: He who hears, let him arise from a deep sleep.” And then he (Adam) wept and shed tears. After he wiped away his bitter tears he spoke asking: “Who is it that calls my name, and whence has this hope come unto me, while I am in the chains of this prison?” And I spoke thus: “I am Pronoai of the pure light; I am the thought of the*
While the orthodox version of Genesis has Eve physically emerging from Adam’s body, and thus establishes God’s sanction of man’s dominion over women (Laura & Buchanan, 2012, p.167). In *The Testimony of Truth*, it is “the serpent [who is] wiser than all the animals that were in Paradise” (Hoeller, 1997, p.4). Hoeller notes after extolling the wisdom of the serpent, the treatise casts serious aspersions on the creator by asking what sort of God is he? The Gnostic response to the rhetorical question was jealousy and envy: “God inflicts cruel punishments on those who transgress his capricious orders and commandments. The treatise comments: “But these are the things he said (and did) to those who believe in him and serve him” (p.5).

The implications are crucial, with a God who presents himself in this manner, “one needs no enemies” (p.5). The *Hypostasis of the Archons* informs us that not only was:

*Eve the emissary of the divine Sophia, but the serpent was similarly inspired by the same supernatural wisdom. Sophia mystically entered the serpent, who thereby acquired the title of instructor. The instructor then taught Adam and Eve about their source, informing them that they were of high holy origin and not merely slaves of the creator deity* (Hoeller, 1997, p.5).

Why were Gnostic texts omitted from the Orthodox Bible? The whole controversy between Orthodox and Gnostic Christians, suggests Pagels (1988) “can be viewed as a battle over the dubious area of the first three chapters of Genesis” (p.57). Feeling threatened, and at risk of failure, the Orthodox Church branded Gnostic beliefs as heresy, for to achieve gnosis, that is knowledge or insight, one did not need clerical intervention (p.57). Pagels notes when we investigate the doctrine of God as it functioned in Orthodox and Gnostic writings the religious question also involved social and political issues. Specifically the later part of the 2nd century insisted upon ‘the one God’ “they simultaneously validated the system of governance in which the Church is ruled by one bishop” (p.59). Contemporary scholars have put forward various arguments in light of the serpent, and Adam and Eve suggesting that the “unfavourable image of the creator contrasted with the favourable one of Adam and Eve, and even of the serpent alludes to an important issue not frequently recognised” (Hoeller, 1997, p.5).
Wisdom is Her Name:

And Her Name is Wisdom:
Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
In the open squares she raises her voice;
Down the crowded ways she calls out,
at the city gates she utters her words
‘How long, you simple ones, will you love inanity,
how long will you turn away my reproof? (Proverbs 1:20-22).

In cultures predating Christianity, the idea of the divine as female was never entirely lost. Scholars have argued The Wisdom literature contains a personified female figure that seems at times to be a secondary figure or the hypostasis of God (Ruether, 2005, p.90; Turner, 1990; Antonelli, 2004). Ruether notes, “scholars’ of this literature have debated whether Wisdom is simply a literary device, a metaphor for God’s wisdom, or a being that has ontological status alongside Yahweh” (Ruether, 2005, p.90). Some have argued Wisdom was associated with the Canaanite or Mesopotamian goddesses Asarte or Inanna. While others suggest Wisdom was drawn from the Egyptian goddess Maát, who represented justice and wisdom of the gods or the Goddess Isis (p.90; Johnson, 1993; Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001). Obscured by Judaism and translated into text, it moved underground into the Shekinah (Long, 1992, p.25, Ruether, 2005, p.95). Baring and Cashford (1991) point out in the early history of Israel the Shekinah, or glory of God dwelt in the sanctuary of the Tabernacle overshadowing the holiest of holies presiding over the Ark of the Covenant (p.641). The Hebrew noun Sh’khinah is derived from the verb Shakam, which means literally the act of dwelling (p.630). Matthews notes the Goddess of Wisdom has had many names and titles, including Nature, the World-Soul, the Blessed Virgin, and the Shekinah, each of them retained part of the Goddess’s image (Matthews, 1992, p.11). The Old Testament bears no reference to a feminine deity, but the way for this image to appear was by way of which the “Pentateuch referred to the ‘presence’ or ‘glory’ of Yahweh as the visible cloud hovering over the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-8) and by the later concept of Hokmah in the Wisdom Books” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.639; Antonelli, 2004). The Shekinah first appeared in Hebrew writing during the 1st century CE, and the manifestation of her as deity could only then, be fully understood by the senses (Baring & Cashford, 1991,
Baring and Cashford draw attention to the fact that the comprehensive mythology surrounding the Shekinah, as a feminine deity, did not fully develop until the Middle Ages (p.639).

However, there is a profound shift as we move into the Christian era as the archetypal imagery of the feminine as Wisdom becomes associated with Christ as Logos, the Word of God, and the relationship between Wisdom and the Goddess is lost (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.611). Long (1992) notes Wisdom is subsumed into the Third Person of the Trinity and finally into ‘Mother Church’, she is never to appear again, and as Long articulates, “she is as if she never was” (p.149; Ruether, 2005). Scholars Pagels, Brakke, Koterski and Matthews affirm the Greek feminine term for ‘wisdom’, is Sophia, (Brakke, 2015, p.143; Koterski, 2009, p.32; Pagels, 2006, p.75; Matthews, 1992, p.9; Johnson, 1993; Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001; Antonelli, 2004). The feminine in Gnosticism is wholly expressed as Sophia, Divine Mother and mediator of all Wisdom: as World-Soul, she is honoured as transcendent “Wisdom: Bride of God” (Brakke, 2015, Koterski, 2009, Pagels, 2006, Matthews, 1992, Arthur, 1984, p.16). Yet, “the vast majority of people have no concept of a Deity as Feminine” (Matthews, 1992, p.9). Sophia notes Lee, is symbolised as the creative and life-giving manifestation of God’s imminence in the world, bridging the gulf between Creator and creation while joining together spirit and matter. She is depicted as providing companionship and sovereignty to those who desire her, a sovereignty that is spelt out in love and knowledge, glory and honour within community (Wis.8:10-16) (Lee, 2001, pp.213-214).

The concept of a male god has been the transcendent symbol for centuries as this image is well established in the collective unconscious. With this in mind, Bede Griffiths (as cited in Matthews, 1992) contends “the Feminine aspect of God, as immanent in creation, pervading and penetrating all things, though found in the Book of Wisdom, has almost been forgotten” (Matthews, 1992, p.9). As Pagels comments in her work The Gnostic Gospels (2006), certain Biblical passages within Proverbs state “God made the world in Wisdom - could Wisdom be the feminine power in which God’s creation [is] conceived” (p.76). Jewish rabbis equated the Torah, the law of God with Sophia, which means feminine wisdom was with god from the beginning (Reed, 2018, p.3; Antonelli, 2004).
On this point, Long (1992) argues that the Hebrew female Wisdom, located in the Book of Wisdom of Solomon, [BWS] is “fully divine”, she is the “alter ego of God”, and is also identified with “Nature whose secrets she knows and shares with humanity” (p.6). The Wisdom of the BWS 7:22b-8:1 is of major significance, as it represents a great repository of female Wisdom, presenting Wisdom to us in all her glory:

...For Wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervade and penetrates most things.
For she is a breath of the power of God, and pure emanation of that glory, of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance to her.
For God loves nothing so much as the [one] who lives with Wisdom.
For she is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars.
Compared with the light she is found to be superior;
For it is succeeded by the night, but against Wisdom evil does not prevail...She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other and she orders all things well. (RSV).

Long (1992) indicates how the really important words are “she” and “her” and it is in “her that all these wonderful characteristics are to be found” (p.47). The presumption here is to show how attitudes change towards “her” (p.6), given the BWS is written during the Hellenistic period, following the writing of the Hebrew Bible (p.37) only to become the possession of greedy men, and finally, to disappear (p.6).

The Feminine Motifs in Nag Hammadi Documents

Brakke (2015), in his treatise on Gnosticism discusses how the Gnostics are “famous not only for female divinities, but also for giving the human female Eve a bigger role in the Genesis story” (p.155). The Gnostics have a book called The Gospel of Eve whereby the voice that speaks comes as “a voice of thunder” (p.155). Brakke (2015) argues in Gnosticism: From Nag Hammadi to the Gospel of Judas, of how the amazing paradox of being a woman in a patriarchal society, whereby “women are simultaneously seen as whores, and virgins; they are revered and despised” (p.155). Women, within Gnosticism, were subject to the same gender discrimination as her Christian
counterparts, yet the feminine cannot be entirely erased. In 2005, Brakke described how “Jordan Scott, the daughter of the famous movie director Ridley Scott, made a commercial for Prada showing beautiful women at various places in the city while a female narrator reads from the Gnostic Thunder Perfect Mind (p.153).

For Scott, this lengthy poem expresses the paradoxical dilemma of femininity (p.153). (For a full discussion on the Thunder Perfect Mind please refer to Chapter 4).

Baring and Cashford (1991) note “Gnostic Christianity however, retained the older tradition and the image of Sophia as the embodiment of Wisdom survived” (p.611). Here she represented the archetypal Great Mother, the consort and counterpart of the male aspect of the godhead (p.611). Phillips (1984) notes the “Jungian notion of archetypes” is clearly the key source which “dealt with the sacred as a union of opposites, thus the Great Mother is seen as both virgin and whore, mother and daughter, creator and destroyer, bringer of life and death” (p.165). In this sense, in patriarchal societies female imagery and also women are, at one and the same, virgins and whores a point that will be further explored as the chapter unfolds.

Ruether (2005) notes the idea of feminine power and imagery is indebted to the Jewish concept of Wisdom as a female companion of God in creation, revelation and redemption, embedded within esoteric exegesis of Genesis 1-6 (p.112). And yet, it is the notion of female Wisdom figures which permeate a great deal of the Gnostic text. Arthur (1984) notes “the study of feminine motifs in the Nag Hammadi documents is important for an understanding of the religious phenomenon called Gnosticism” (p.11). Hippolytus in the 2nd century of the Christian era, reports that “Gnosticism took its beginnings from the wisdom of the Greeks, from the conclusions of those who have formed the systems of philosophy” and from the mysteries, “in the interpretation of vital motifs” (pp.12-13). Arthur describes Isis as the source of the Jewish Sophia, supported by the feminine aetiologies in Jewish-styled and oriented Nag Hammadi documents. The mythology of Isis supported the imagery for the figure of Sophia who determines creation (p.16; Johnson, 1993; Devlin-Glass & McCredden, 2001). In the non-Christian tractate, Eugnostos the Blessed calls Sophia “HANTENETIPA, creatrix of the universe” (III.82.5) (p.16). Parrott points out that it is Sophia who is responsible for divine light and begetter of all things (Parrott, 1990, pp.221-233).
The exegesis of Genesis, as described within the confines of Gnosticism, does not conform to the orthodox rendering of the Genesis story where it is the male god who expropriates the powers of the feminine in bringing forth life. Important feminine motifs transpire *On the Origin of the World*, Arthur (1984) writes Eve is the daughter of Sophia, she exists before Adam, and Eve is the one who gives Adam life, saying to him “Adam live! Rise up upon earth!”(II.116.2-3). Adam rises and says to her: “You will be called ‘Mother of the Living’ because you are the one who gave me life” (116.6-8) (Arthur, 1984; p.16; Pagels, 2006). The feminist theology as argued by Arthur does not point to Eve being disobedient and committing a sin, unlike the traditional rendering of the Genesis story.

How do Adam’s sons attain wives? A second feminine redeemer appears in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* in the person of Norea (p.16). Eve bears a daughter, apparently named Norea, she is the soteriological figure called a “saving virgin (HAPGENOC NEOHGETA) for generations and generations of mankind”, albeit “the virgin whom no power has defiled” (91.35-92.3) (Arthur, 1984, p.16; Brakke, 2015, p.114). Norea is the recipient of revelation from Eleth; Sophia “who made ‘the images of heaven’; her daughter Zoe who rebukes the arrogant archon; as the ‘pneumatic woman’ (Arthur, 1984; , p.110). On *The Origin of the World* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, Arthur notes that “the mythological presentation is almost set with feminine imagery, from the formation of the world by Pistis Sophia and the creation of Eve before Adam to the destruction of the world by the unnamed goddess” (p.ix). The comparison of feminine motifs is followed by a presentation of linguistic evidence that indicates “the Hyperstasis of the Archons is dependent in part on the Coptic text of *On the Origin of the World*” (p.ix; Bethge & Layton, 1990, p.171). It would appear that the text from *Nag Hammadi*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (literally, the ‘Triple-formed Primal Thought’), celebrates the feminine powers of Thought, Intelligence, and Foresight (Pagels, 2006, p.77). According to Arthur (1984) the *Trimorphic Protennia* celebrates feminism among the *Nag Hammadi* documents. She is the ‘voice’ as well as the ‘silence’, she is both ‘the Father’ and ‘the Son’, she is beyond the Trinitarian formula and suggests Arthur (1984), “she is some kind of mathematical unity behind ‘masculinities’, ‘powers’, and ‘names’: “I am the invisible one within the all...I am the one who dawned upon the all...I am the one joined with everyone within the hidden
thought...I am the image of the invisible spirit...(I am) the Mother and the light which she appointed as Virgin” p.168).

The feminine imagery seems to have stemmed from a pre-Christian Barbelo cult that promoted a “lofty pantheistic vitalism which could easily adapt to Christianity” (Arthur, 1984, p.169). Within Gnosticism discipleship is not the privilege of men only, women are respected members who participate, a role increasingly denied to women in the institutionalized churches of the second and third centuries (Arthur, 1984, p.18; Pagels, 1979; Pagels, 1988; Haag, 2016), and for those centuries to come.

In the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (as cited in Rose, 1984) there are seven women students, who are said to have followed Jesus alongside of the twelve disciples. Reference is also made in the *Gospel of Philip* to the three holy women who were Jesus’ constant companions (Arthur, 1984, p.18; Haag, 2016). The Gospel of Luke 8:1-3 has Mary Magdalene, Joana and Susana and “many others” providing for Jesus and his twelve disciples out of their own resources, independent of men (Haag, 2016; Ruether, 2005; Schaberg, 2004; Spong, 1992). Spong (1992) adds “women who followed a male band of disciples had to be wives, mothers or prostitutes” (p.194). Orthodoxy and Gnosticism articulated very different experiences: the Orthodox Church, society, and politics all conform to a patriarchal hierarchy, while the Gnostic engage in an intensely private, solitary interior journey towards self-realization or *gnosis* (Pagels, 2006, pp.149-150). Sources of Gnostic teachings are among those not included in the select text that constitutes the New Testament collection (p.78). Around 200CE, after the sorting of various text had been concluded, virtually all that pertained to the feminine image of God had been removed from Orthodox text, identifying the Gnostic canon as heretical by those who called themselves Orthodox Christians (p.78). Gnostic Christianity brought a new vision to sacred text, one which explicated and honoured the Feminine Principle as Wisdom it was not defined by parochial male imagery as in Orthodox traditions.

The Virgin and the Whore

It could argued, that the Bible is the work of male imaginings rather than God, displaying all the ignorant political and misogynistic tendencies of patriarchy. This
thesis has demonstrated that a particular form of religiously orientated sexism has been promulgated through historical narratives across diverse times and societies. In *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, Schaberg argues that the figures of Mary of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene are the two most prominent women in the Christian Testament, their images deal with the two ends of the spectrum of male misrepresentation of women (Schaberg, 2004, p.13). Their stories have had a vast impact on thought, imagination, art and social arrangement. Qualls-Corbett (1988) in her book *The Sacred Prostitute: Eternal Aspects of the Feminine* she writes, “within the figures of Mary Magdalene, and the Virgin Mary, the conventional view of motherhood and sexuality are divided, there is no room within the Christian paradigm for a woman who is neither a virgin or whore” (p.146; Schaberg, 2004; Meyer & de Boer, 2004; Hinsdale, 2011; Lee, 2018a,b). Schaberg notes no other Biblical figure, including Judas has had a such a vivid post-Biblical life, if Mary Magdalene the whore did not exist, “we who are interested in the history of man’s idea of women would have to invent her, as complement and contrast to the Virgin Mother” (Schaberg, 2004, p.68). In this context, the victimisation of Mary Magdalene acts as a metaphor for the historically subordinate position of women within Christianity (p.68). Unlike ancient man, whose love of the erotic was not considered incompatible with spirituality, Qualls-Corbett contends “the Christian fathers negated the very element needed for the renewal of life, the dynamic, transforming, feminine aspect of the psyche” (p.146). This is most apparent in the image of Mary Magdalene which carries the dynamic transforming aspects of the Feminine: passion, spirituality and joyfulness (p.152).

Haag (2016), argues in his book *The Quest for Mary Magdalene*, that at the heart of the Christian mystery there is only two people: Jesus and Mary Magdalene (p.81). In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Gnostic Gospels portray Mary Magdalene as the “companion”, “consort”, and even “wife of Jesus”, as the woman he “loved more than all the other disciples” (Haag, 2016, p.x-xii; Markale, 1999, p.147; Spong, 1992, p.189; Schaberg, 2004; Hinsdale, 2011; Lee, 2018a). Theologian and scholar, John Shelby-Spong suggests there are “hints in the Biblical text that Jesus was married” (Spong, 1992, p.189). However Spong could be reading more into the relationship than the texts imply.
During the Middle Ages, Haag (2016) contends the French Cathars claimed Mary Magdalene as the wife of Jesus (pp.257-262). The resurrection stands at the centre of the Christian religion which has shaped the history, and the culture of the world for the past two thousand years (Haag, 2016, p.xi; Spong, 1992, 189; Schaberg, 2004; Hinsdale, 2011; Lee, 2018a). Because the Gnostic mystery lay not in the symbolism of the crucifixion, and resurrection, it undermined the rationale of the “Great Commission”, that is, the resurrection of Jesus and the command to go and spread the gospel throughout the world, which subsequently became the basis for the “Apostolic See” of Rome, in conjunction with the “principal of apostolic succession”, thus becoming the foundation stone of the hierarchical order of the Church (Schmatz, 2019, p.1; Haag, 2016, pp.201-2).

Mary Magdalene is the first person Jesus revealed himself to at the resurrection (Haag, 2016, p.3; Markale, 1999, p.259; Spong, 1992, p.191; Schaberg, 2004; Lee, 2018a). Brakke (2015) notes “she is at the crucifixion and the burial (Mark 16:1; Matt. 28:1; Luke 24:10; John 20:1), she is the only person close to him at the critical times that define his purpose, describe his fate, and that will give rise to a new religion” (Haag, 216, p.291; Schaberg, 2004; Lee, 2018a). Meyer and de Boer (2004) contend that in spite of being a woman, Mary Magdalene is the first disciple of the new religion, and in this light she is “the apostle to the apostles” (p.77; Brakke, 2015, p.291; Haag, 2016, p.233; Lee, 2018a; Hinsdale, 2011; Ruther, 2005; Schaberg, 2004) established the evidence did not support Mary Magdalene being a prostitute, “it represented a smear campaign against women, and patriarchy got away with it because there too many Marys in the Bible” (p.122; Haag, 2016, p.216). According to Haag “the fourth century Church needed to defend its hierarchy, and as such control of the Magdalene is paramount since she is too close to Jesus (Haag, 2016, p.216; Schaberg, 2004; Lee, 2018a). Unlike his mother, she knew too much, Haag stating “there was nothing passive about Mary Magdalene” (p.216). In this respect the Church declared an all out assault on her in defence and hierarchy, as her powers and visions as evidenced in the Gnostic Gospels, and also in the canonical gospels are the antithesis of Church rules and dogma (p.216). Various scholars have advanced the presumption that history and scripture have stereotyped the Magdalene as a forgiven prostitute, rather than a leading disciple (Meyer & de Boer, 2004, p.xv; Haag, 2016, p.216; Ruther, 2005, p.122; Schaberg, 2004; Hinsdale, 20011; Lee, 2018a). The Canon is designed to fit Orthodoxy, with the
intention of excluding powerful women from the text. Haag’s study shows that by the sixth century, Pope Gregory, in his Thirty-third Homily, fixed the identity of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute in both ecclesiastical and popular mind, for the next fourteen hundred years (Haag, 2016, p.233; Lee, 2018a). Spong notes there is not one set of evidence to support this claim of Mary being a prostitute, contending it was Luke, as well as Pope Gregory, who set out to destroy the Magdalene’s reputation (Spong, 1992, p.198; Lee, 2018a). By combining several gospel verses, Pope Gregory the Great (cited in Spong, 1992; Hinsdale, 2011) delivered his homily declaring the Magdalene was a whore:

She whom Luke calls a sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be the Mary, from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark. And what did these seven devils signify, if not all the vices...She displayed her hair to set off her face, but now her hair dries her tears. She had spoken proud things with her mouth, but in kissing the Lord’s feet, she now planted her mouth on the Redeemers feet (pp.78-79).

And yet, 1970 saw the Vatican having a change heart by “very quietly retracting their statement, declaring they had got it wrong” (Haag, 2016, p.233; Lee, 2018a). Her description as the penitent whore has overshadowed her significance for Christian faith as favoured disciple, witness and leader (Lee, 2018a, pp.4-5). The Magdalene, like Eve, is brought into existence by the powerful undertow of misogyny. In spite of this Meyer & de Boer (2004), Schaberg (2004), HAAG (2016), Lee (2018), and Spong (1992) advance the notion that the relationship between Jesus and the Magdalene within scripture, can often be described in “erotic terms” (Lee, 2018a, p.6; Meyer & de Boer, p.49; Schaberg, p.80; Haag, 2016, p.132; Spong, 1992, p.195). John 12, brings to light the story of a woman “who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair” (Spong, 1992, p.195; Haag, 2016, p.90). Mark also tells a story of a woman from Bethany who anointed Jesus with “pure nard” (Mark 14:3); Luke tells a similar story (Luke 37-39) here Luke describes the woman is a sinner, and a woman of the city (p.195), in the first century this is a common description of a prostitute: “A woman known in the town to be a sinner learned that he was dining in the Pharisee’s home. She brought in a vase of perfumed oil and stood behind him at his feet, weeping so that her tears fell at his feet. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissing them and perfuming them with the oil” (Luke 7:37-39).
Writing in *God of all Worlds*, Angela Carter (as cited in Vardley, 1995) states “here we meet Mary Magdalene in the gospels doing something extraordinary with her hair...the scene painted in the gospels is an astonishing image and highly erotic” (p.236). On this point, the feet can be described as one of the most sensual and sensitive parts of the body. The intimate role of Mary anointing Jesus’ head with oil, kissing his feet, and wiping his feet with her hair, would have had to have been carried out by someone Jesus was used to being intimate with. The actions of Mary Magdalene proffers Spong (1992), “would have only been appropriate in one way of two roles; either she was his wife or she was a prostitute” (p.196). Cojocaru (2011) found “the association of prostitution and anointing within the Goddess religion included both these tasks as sacred rituals, though the term ‘prostitution’ cannot convey the original religious meaning” (p.11). The priestesses that were attached to the cult of Inanna/Ishtar had a specific function organized into groups, and presided over by a great priestess they performed ritual prostitution as if they were an incarnation of the Goddess herself (Markale, 1999, p.100). In light of the mythological tradition that preceded the Magdalene, Cojocaru, describes how when Ishtar/Inanna offered marriage to Gilgamesh, she tells him of how he will be a celebrated king, that dignitaries and priests will bow down and “kiss your feet” (Cojocaru, 2011, p.11). The act of anointing, state Baring and Cashford, also recalls Gilgamesh’s lament for his dead friend Enkidu in which he interpreted as saying: “The harlot who anointed you with fragrant ointment laments for you now, but the word harlot was a translation of the word *quadishtu*, which in its original sense meant ‘sacred hierodule or priestess’” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.592).

Ritual anointing can also be connected to the sacrifice of the Goddess’s son-lover-husband as “Inanna’s tears also flowed for her lost lord” (p.592). The implications founded in the traditions which preceded her is not lost in the consequence of Mary Magdalene mistaking the risen Christ for the resurrected ‘gardener’ (as he returns from the underworld) is also the same name given to the son-lover of the Sumerian goddess Inanna/Ishtar (pp.592, 632). According to Baring, and Cashford, Walker and also Haag, the name Magdalene means “she of the temple-tower” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.592; Haag, 2016, p.88; Walker, 1985, p.88). By incorporating the issues that surrounded “the exorcism and forgiveness” of Mary Magdalene, may well point to “the conversion of a temple priestess from the Canaanite religion, to the new religion of Jesus” (Baring, Cashford, 1991, p.592; Walker, 1985, p.88).
Research from Ruether (2005) emphasises how Mary Magdalene is mentioned in seven Gnostic writings: The Sophia of Jesus Christ; The Dialogue of the Savoir; The First Apocalypse of James; The Gospel of Thomas; The Gospel of Philip; The Pistas Sophia, and The Gospel of Mary. The writings of the Christian Gnostics regarding gender symbolism of both male, and female, differed remarkably towards the roles played by the women disciples (Ruether, 2005, p.122; Schuberg, 2004; Hinsdale, 2011). Haag (2016) highlights the fact the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, is the only gospel to be named after a woman, she is the disciple Jesus most loves, “she is the woman who knows and understood the all” (p.211). One could argue by association Mary Magdalene displays the same unique wisdom as the Egyptian Goddess Isis as discussed earlier, and in chapter 4. According to Haag she “displays a visionary power that allows her to take the lead, or to direct the disciples away from fear and out into the world to preach the word” (p.209). In medieval times she is called “the light bearer” harking back to her Gnostic epithet, academics Haag, Markale, Qualls-Corbett, Baring and Cashford all note, as the “inheritor of light” Mary Magdalene searches for the truth, both in the divine realm and the world of humans (Haag, 2016, p.x-xii; Markale, 1999, p.147; Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.592: Qualls-Corbet, 1988, p.150). Research from Meyer and de Boer (2005), note the Gospel of Mary defends the primacy of Mary as Jesus most beloved disciple, and her teaching is the most reliable source for revelation (pp.16-17; Brakke, 2015, p.298: Lee, 2018). The gospel sheds further light on the fact that Mary Magdalene is the first person to see the empty tomb however orthodoxy has Paul proclaiming Peter as the first person to see the risen Jesus, taking primacy over Mary Magdalene, with Peter becoming the first Pope, “the undisputed leader of the emerging church” (Brakke, 2015, p.298; Meyers & de Boer, 2005, p.49; Schaberg, 2004; Hinsdale, 2011; Lee, 2018a). Brakke (2015) identifies the gospel as condemning the emerging power structures in the Church that restricted authority to male priests (p.298). Hinsdale notes it is sexual politics playing a key role within Biblical exegesis and Christian history, feminists are required to piece together bits of evidence to understand the role of women’s ministry during the early period of Christianity. The exclusion of Mary Magdalene as leader and disciple from traditional text has been a strategic attempt to exclude women from positions of apostolic leadership (Hinsdale, 2011, pp.76-78). Ostensibly, Peter represents the views of many Christians over the role of women in the church that they should not teach and the nature of religious authority
Meyer and de Boer (2005) suggest “the conflict between Peter and Mary, also well known from the Gospel of Thomas and Pistis Sophia, highlights the central place of Mary Magdalene as beloved disciple of Jesus and preeminent leader in the early church” (p.18).

The interest in Mary Magdalene did not confine itself to the Gospels. In 2003, Dan Brown released his top-selling book the *Da Vinci Code*, followed by the movie in 2006. Giannini (2008) poses the question, as to what is inside this book that has so inflamed the imagination and touched so many souls? Giannini points to the sacred Feminine, the “mystery and wonderment that serves our souls...the other face of God that has not been honoured over the two millennia of Christianity” has created a spiritual vacuum (pp.63-64). This point will be further explored in the next section when we examine the figure of the Virgin Mary.

### Sin and Sexuality as a Communicable Disease

*From a woman, sin had its beginning and because of her we all die* (Ben Sirach 25:24).

Spong (1992) argues that by elevating the Virgin Mother to the role of primary woman, in the Christian story “the figure of the virgin has been employed as a male weapon to repress women defining them in the name of God called Father; to be less than human than males, to be the source of sexual desire that was thought to be evil, therefore to be guilty for just being women” (p.198).

However, the Church does not honour the Virgin Mother in all her forms, denying her Crone destroying aspect of the archetypal Terrible Mother which abrogates all life only to start anew. This study has sought to demonstrate how the Church Father’s obsessive behaviour together with their fixated approach toward women, sexuality also a loathing of the body has encumbered women and men both socially and psychologically throughout the centuries. Coates (2009) points out how Jewish and Christian interpreters of the ‘Fall’ saw an obvious order of guilt, resolving to lay blame and shame at the feet of woman: Eve (pp.20-21). Research from Griffin notes that Origen and Tertullian, writing in the 3rd century CE, made the sexual act a great sin, “blaming
women for luring Christian men into sexual indulgence which they may otherwise have been strong enough to resist” (Griffin, 1999, p.22).

At the heart of Western philosophical thought lies at best, an ambivalence towards, and very often a loathing for, the body; again and again, one finds a profound desire to reject, or be purified from the flesh. The philosophical tradition towards this attitude of the so-called stain of the flesh comes down to us from Plato (Switzer, 1998, p.39).

Manichaeism shares several characteristics as Gnosticism. Brakke (2015) notes that for Mani (216-274), founder of the Christian sect, salvation was not primarily founded on gnosis, instead discipline of the body and ritual purification, played a central role in the ongoing war between Good and Evil (p.398). Mani’s sect was known as the Mughtasila, which means “the ones who wash themselves” (p.398). In books three and five, Switzer (1998) notes, Augustine, steeped within Platonic tradition, railed so vociferously against the ‘concupiscence’ of the flesh that he came very close to embracing the heresy of Manichaeism (p.39). For Augustine, states Brakke (201), it entailed celibacy, though he was reluctant to take such a step, instead he would pray: “Lord give me chastity but not yet’ (p.422).

This statement from Augustine is somewhat problematic, and all in all dishonest, if we bear in mind his view on sin that, “the sins of the fathers and mothers are visited on the sons and daughters - sin and sexuality are intricately woven” (Phillips, 1984, p.136). In her book The Mistress, Griffin (1999) points out:

Eve the temptress is seen in every woman, particularly a beautiful woman. And man fears her because she arouses his desire, and his body responds to her whether he wills it or not. His sexuality, to be precise, his penis, is one area of himself which he cannot control, and so he must put the blame for this onto woman. She has bewitched him (p.23).

Women are a temptation, both object, and cause of man’s desire. In certain fundamentalist traditions women are made to cover themselves from head to toe because of man’s lack of ability in resisting her (Griffin, 1999, p.22). In this sense, the view of women as an unconscious tempter is unconsciously endorsed under the law of many countries which sees the female as victim of rape as partially if not wholly culpable (Matthews, 1992, p.55). In Matthews words, “fear of the feminine, is often fear
of the chaotic and ecstatic nature of sexuality itself” (p.54). Christian doctrine, rather than establishing the beginning of female inferiority somewhat cements the notion, thus continuing a chain of thought already firmly in practise. The symbolic devaluing of women is one of the founding metaphors for Western civilization by way of which the major gender tenets, symbols and metaphors have been derived from Mesopotamia and Hebrew sources (Lerner, 1986a, pp.10-11). Yahweh, Aristotle, God, and early Church Fathers (as noted through the thesis) all without exception devalued women. Women as economic property, state Laura and Buchanan (2012) is an:

attitude which is morally sanctioned in the Scriptures are found in Genesis and Judges (Genesis 19:5) and (Judges 19:25) whereby women–as-resource is fostered beliefs instrumental in the institutionalisation of patriarchy, which in turn has engendered social structures which has led to the exploitation of both women and the environment (p.169).

The Church Father’s model for holiness aligned with the figure of the Virgin Mary (Phillips, 1984, p.136). Man is “fallen through woman” (Eve), and may be “redeemed through woman” (Mary), Phillips notes their sexual interpretation of the Fall, represents a fall from grace, and as such can only be validated through the doctrine of the virginity of Mary (p.136). Mariology suggests that the Virgin became the foremost symbol of purity. By contemplating and emulating virginity, “Wholeness”, writes Marina Warner (2000) “is equated with holiness” (p.136). The virgin soul to Christianity means no sex, Markale contends their “attitude is fully justified in the context of their epoch” as they are fighting against the neo-paganism of the late Empire and Gnosticism, the Christian religion had to survive” (Markale, 1999, p.16). However, this premise is significantly flawed. As Baring and Cashford make clear, “in the Gospels Jesus does not refer to original sin, nor equate sexuality with sinfulness, this became one of the foundation stones of Christian teaching” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.514). Guile (1989) notes neo-Paganism found resonance in ecstatic mystery traditions, seeing the divine force in nature, not in the remote inaccessible intangible God of Christianity (p.241). Neo-Pagan religion celebrates the gods and goddesses of fertility and nature, holding to the view all life is sacred and interconnected (p.242). The Church Fathers had a pathological fear of women the traditional masculine image of God arose in and currently supports patriarchy. In A History of God from Abraham to the Present research from Armstrong
describes how, “Western Christianity has never recovered from this neurotic misogyny which can be seen in the unbalanced reaction to the idea of the ordination of women” (Armstrong, 2003, p.60; Power, 1995, p.4). (A topic which will be fully discussed in the following chapter). At a deeper level, the experience of our body is critical to our spiritual journey as the body of womanhood needs to be restored to its essential sacred position in the West. The Goddess is the symbol of the sacred power within women and Nature, suggesting the connectedness between women’s cycles of menstruation, birth, and menopause, and the life and death cycles of the universe (Christ, 1997, 2020). Matthews contends that “the loss of the Divine Feminine from our consciousness is a wound which we all have to carry, without her dimension of love, and justice, we exile ourselves from the earth, from physicality, and from each other” (Matthews, 1992, p.54). With this in mind, the place of the Feminine within the religious realm of Christianity has been tenuous at best given the only acceptable outlet for the Feminine Principle is the cult of the Virgin Mary. Lee notes the eternal purity and virginity of Mary has been irrefutably damaging to women over the centuries (Lee, 2018b, p.2). Over time the character of Mary has been distorted, turning her into a submissive, dependant creature without threat to patriarchal structures. In line with the New Testament, Lee argues the early church gave Mary the title of “God Bearer” (Theotokos), thus becoming part of Christian orthodoxy, and not tied to her virginity (p.5). Catholic women across the world have found solace in Mary, especially against the images, symbols, and language of a very masculine judgemental God, and the brutality of a political and religious hierarchy. However, Mary as perpetual-maried-virgin deprives women not only of a model of leadership and courage, “but of sexual desire and passion (p.5). Mary’s voice has been permitted, but only in filtered terms while women’s voices remain silent.

During the Middle-Ages the Virgin Mary is stereotyped as the supreme mother who reigns over mankind (Matthews, 2002b, p.136). However, only two aspects of womanhood are recognised within the figure of Mary that is Virgin and Mother, her Crone aspect has been completely ignored by the Church Fathers. Mary has been denied her archetypal crone aspect as the Terrible Mother. (This subject will be further explored as the chapter unfolds). Men control by fear, within Judae/Christian metaphysics God’s imaginary relies on fear: God is jealous, all powerful and omnipotent. Walker (1985) notes, the only emotion that controls men is fear: “the
paradox within the woman’s movement is how to control men’s morality while maintaining fear is evil” (p.10). Men control not only religion, technology, education, communications economy, and military force, the answer states Walker, lies in the realm of images (p.10). There are profound connections between adult sexuality and mother-child bonding in the first years of life, Walker maintains men’s fear of female rejection is in her unwillingness to love them. Nearly all the patriarchal rules for feminine behaviour are aimed at immobilizing each woman into the service of a man, so she can have no economic, sexual, or intellectual freedom to say no (pp.10-11).

Pagan Myth Becomes Christian Symbolism

A further example of the Feminine Principle being taken over and incorporated into Christian assimilation comes from the Grail legends. Steeped within the Celtic tradition the Grail legends are first recorded in 12th century, where they are subsumed as apocryphal Christian legends: pagan myth becomes Christian symbolism (Matthews, 2002b, p.142). Authors Gardner and Osborne (2005) note the stories are popularised for propaganda purposes, and taken over by patriarchy, yet it is the Feminine Principle which remains (p.7). There is no connection with the Cup of the Last Supper in spite of the fact that “Sir Thomas Malory, author of the fifteenth-century *Morte d’Arthur*, was the first to use the words ‘Holy Grail’ and said that *Sankreal* was the blessed blood of Christ” (Gardner & Osborn, 2005, p.9). There are other aspects to the Grail, as the cup embodies the feminine symbol of regeneration and transformation and as such is directly descended from the ancient and holy belief in Sovereignty (Matthews, 2002b, p.142; Devlin-Glass, 2001).

According to Matthews (2002b), the basis for the Celtic concept of Sovereignty “is related to the Middle Eastern concept of Wisdom as Sophia, who consorts with kings as the creative and wisdom-bestowing mystic woman appearing in the form of either an angelic presence or an earthly woman” (p.142; Devlin-Glass & McCreddon, 2001). The Celtic Sovereignty Goddess is primarily concerned with the prosperity of the land she is not merely the soil, and substance of the territory, but also the spiritual and legal dominion which the rightful king, her spouse, who exercised over it (Lysaght, 1986, p.205; Devlin-Glass, 2001). In her book, *King Arthur and the Goddess of the Land*,
Matthews (2000a) advises us that the ancient rite of kings comes from the custom of matrilineal descent, whereby “the king held the land by right of his female relatives” (p.142). The king’s union with the land, and the Goddess of Sovereignty, is a very special one characterized by an exchange of energies and powers: the king swears to uphold his land and people and to be true to them, while “Sovereignty gives him Otherworldly gifts enabling him to keep his oath” (p.17).

The Grail quest is a paradigm for our own spiritual quest (Matthews, 2002b, p.136). De Motte’s study (2003), *The Grail Quest: Search for Transcendence*, found the Fisher King, and the Wasteland nexus are two symbols that go together and form a myth within the Grail Mythology (p.62). The same symbolism is also represented by an individual’s or king’s search for a sacred object to restore healing and fertility to the land (p.62). The king holds his position by “right of moral succession” he has to be “perfect” (in mind body and spirit), except he now has received a “wound that never heals” (p.62). The king and land can only be restored by a visit from “Sovereignty, or the Grail hero” (deMotte, 2003, p.62). de Motte contends the Fisher King’s wound is our wound given the “seeds of our problem were sown in the modern Western world at the beginning of the second millennium” (p.67). This represented a transition period between the late Middle-Ages and the beginnings of modern science and technology. With the advent of materialism, combined with the fetish of rationalism, and loss of his/our connection to Nature, the emotional, feeling function of man became suppressed, thus causing the wound. De Motte describes how the “king and wasteland nexus” corresponds with the king’s health and land as the masculine principle, and the Earth Goddess as Feminine Principle (p.67). We can use the symbolism to throw light on our understanding of human nature: the dominant male principle as king is ailing; his land is a barren wasteland because the two principles are in disharmony because “at an individual level the intuitive self has failed to respond to the intuitive call of the Greater Self, the call of the Grail” (de Motte, 2003, p.67).

As already established in earlier chapters, pre-Christian religion, that is, of an all-powerful Mother, has almost been obliterated because men found her intimidating. Most religions made a definite place for ancient cyclic images of maiden, mother, and crone. However argues Walker, “the Christian notion of heaven” put an end to the cycles because the whole premise of “Christianity is the rejection of death” (Walker, 1985,
Theologian, Rosemary Radford Ruether (2005) astutely notes:

*Male eschatology is built on the negation of the mother...The escape from sex and birth is ultimately an attempt to escape from death for which woman as Eve and mother is made responsible. Male eschatology combines male womb envy with womb negation*. The life given by Mother was always cyclic, never eternal. For some men it was never enough. They wanted life everlasting (p.82)

Walker (1985) draws attention to the negative archetype of the darker feminine image, as Crone Mother, who can destroy, “part of our culture is to deny death by inflicting death on others” (p.13). Christianity claims to be a religion “founded on love” and yet, as Long contends it is “unboundedly cruel and hypocritical”, historically atrocities are carried out in “God’s name” (Long, 1992, p.140). Eller (2000) notes religion as a social and ideological system has the capacity and the tendency to “create a reality in which violence is acceptable, necessary and even desirable” (p.79). This ideology has been confirmed in the unmitigated violence pitted against women and the accusations of witchcraft. During the Dark Ages ‘Holy War’ became part of Christian ethos in the crusades where military force was brought to bear between Christian knights and Muslim invaders (pp.256-260). Holy wars were carried out within the Christian movement: the Waldensons and Cathars/Albigensians of the 1200s, John Wycliffe’s Lollardy movement founded in 1300s had been suppressed by the Inquisition (as cited in Eller, 2010, p.260). Come forward in time to present day George W Bush’s “enemy of God”, is the infidel who is once again “central to the historical and contemporary rhetorical campaigns and propaganda machinery of self righteous warfare against strategically chosen scapegoats” (Denike, 2003, p.12; Christ, 2018d). In *With God on Their Side*, Ester Kaplan (2004) noted, “Bush and his conservative evangelical base are on the same team – God’s team” (p.7). It could be argued that Christianity has been the guiding force for the subjugation of women, nature, and so called inferior peoples who do not share the same presumptions.

In ancient times it seemed obvious that it is the female who brings forth life, given the Great Mother is theologically very different to the Heavenly Father. The Church Fathers while promoting the Virgin Mary as the all-encompassing loving mother denied her Crone aspect as the Terrible Mother. The Terrible Mother is both creator and destroyer
of the universe, thus bringing an end to all life only to prepare anew for the next cycle (Walker, 1985, p.14). Catholics revere Mary, but she is not “God the Mother” who is on equal footing with “God the Father”. New science has established the cyclic nature of our planet, nothing is unrelated, every living form in the universe blends eventually into every other form, there can be no hierarchy of better, or worse. This Goddess of Beginnings has many names, her title is related to the word “crown” which is indicative of Wisdom, she is “the first Holy Trinity as Virgin, Mother and Crone, or alternatively, Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer” (p.21). Upon analysis, the Crone is the Old Woman who acknowledges no master, and as Walker (1985) has argued “may be our best guide in this long dark labyrinth [of our] spiritual journey” (p.14). One of the dangers of resurrecting the Goddess archetype lies in its proximity to unscientific and unworkable explanations of the natural world, which must be carefully weeded out, so that the valid core concepts come to the fore (p.21). Walker contends: “If feminist spirituality is to become firmly established, it must be at the bottom rational. This means taking account of what the archetypes signify, in terms of the collective human psyche that evolved them, rather than as explanations of the external world” (p.21).

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to identify how Wisdom once revered as the Feminine Principle has been trampled on, anathematised and made a mockery of by Church Fathers and patriarchal epistemology. History is always reported by the winners, however if we call attention to sacred text, literature, and mythology, as already demonstrated, there are many examples of people turning to the reliance, and knowledge of wise-women, seers, and oracles: women were prophets and philosophers. Gnostic Christianity, is not only famous for its female figures as divine, it provides a greater account for the respect of women. This is most apparent in the way Gnosticism defined Wisdom under many feminine motifs which identified her with Eastern goddesses as argued in Chapter 4. Wisdom was the ‘light bearer’ which led into spiritual awareness and insight she was literally the “thought that dwells in the light” (Martin, 2010, p.77). Gnostic Christianity also identified the figure of Mary Magdalene as ‘the bringer of light’ as she and her fellow female disciples took the teachings of the
new religion out into the ‘light’ of the world. The study of female figures within Gnosticism and early Christianity has made a positive contribution towards feminist scholarship. Their presence is defended against such misogynistic disciples like Peter. Conversely, monotheism represents a separation from feminine Wisdom, subsumed within patristic scholarship wisdom re-emerges in the male figure of Christ, and eventually disappears. Hinsdale (2011) notes, Gnosticism and the Mary Magdalene tradition led many to raise the question whether without “this ‘apostle to the apostles’ would there have been any Christianity at all” (Hinsdale, 2011, p. 69). Theology, and the dominance of gender defining by the Church Fathers obliterated the sacredness of the body, sacred-sexuality, alongside of anything considered outside of doctrinal bounds was viewed as an abomination and heretical.
Chapter 6: The Ordination of Women as Equals

“Religion is flawed but only because man is flawed” Dan Brown, Angels and Demons

Introduction

We have discerned from the previous chapter how the Divine Feminine, once revered as Wisdom, and an epithet of the Great Goddess, moved underground to become the Shekinah in Judaism. With the advent of Christianity the notion, and the meaning of female wisdom was subsumed into the logos, or word of god. The Church Fathers denied the very gifts of the Feminine, while paradoxically taking these attributes as their own, subsuming them in the figure of Christ. Women were prophets, seers, and oracles; as women they were maligned and scapegoated by patriarchal hegemony and Christian exegesis. Moreover, the subject of women has been greatly distorted through the editorial lens of sexist, gender bias, as noted throughout these chapters, history has been told by the winners. In saying this, the Bible was written a long time ago, however its influence still impacts the lives of millions of people today. Without feminist theologians, and historians, an enormous amount of literature concerning the Feminine would have been simply lost. From the outset, this study has argued that the Creation Myth of Genesis has been responsible for the subjugation of women throughout the ages regarding them as different to creation, and as such the narrative lies buried deeply within the collective unconscious. Very little has changed since the mythology was assembled. Eve, as the archetypal image of every woman, does not fit within the paradigm of a male image of God, therefore setting up presumptions in regard of women: “For Adam was created first, Eve afterward; moreover, it was not Adam who was deceived but the woman. It was she who was led astray and fell into sin” (1 Timothy 2:13-14).

Raming (1981) notes as time goes by, there is an increasing tendency “for supporters of the ‘masculine argument’ to insist that their ‘anti-feminine’ doctrine is not discriminatory but natural, i.e. otherness legitimises subordination, based on created difference in nature between men and women” (p.4). Arguments from theologians and
priests supported the idea that women had never entered the priesthood, and the episcopate, relying on ancient sources as reference for conferring ‘Orders’ upon women (Otranto, 1991, p.2). There is however, Biblical evidence which has been advanced by theologians and historians in support of the fact that Jesus included women in his ministry (Otranto, 1991; Hollyday, 1994; Ruether, 1998; Fiorenza & Häring, 1999; Wijngaards, 2001; Rue, 2009; Haag, 2016; Frankenberry, 2018), and yet Pope John Paul II (as cited in Raming, 1981) stated that “women will not be admitted to the priestly office because it is counter to Jesus’ intention...one feels no shame in enlisting the intention of Jesus to support this procedure” (p.5).

Therein lies the blatant offense against the human rights and dignity of women, Raming (1981) states that it is “the man in the church [who] defines the essence, nature of woman; he determines what her tasks in the church are or are not; he arrogates himself knowing and interpreting God’s will for women” (p.5). At the root of this argument lies the dilemma of power, which has been institutionalised, and in itself has become perverted and pathological (Litonjua, 2018, p. 305). As noted in the previous chapter the cult of the Virgin Mary represents a paradox for the Catholic Church in the way that the Church has marginalised women. Within the heart of Marian piety is a deep contradiction: in 2014 Pope Francis outlined the “model of maternity for the church is the Virgin Mary [who] in the fullness of time conceived through the Holy Spirit and gave birth to the Son of God” (Lee, 2018b, p.6). If that were true notes Lee, “then women could be ordained, since their connection to Mary would allow them, like her, to represent the church. If the world received the body of Christ from Mary, then women today should not be excluded from giving the body of Christ, as priests, to the faithful at mass” (p.7).

**Institutional Hubris**

If we compare the original small group which surrounded Jesus at the beginning of his ministry and the Catholic Church today numbering in the millions, spreading out extensively and across the world, there are only two people that stand at the heart of the Christian mystery: Mary Magdalene and Jesus (Haag, 2016, p.81). Mary is the first person Jesus revealed himself to at the resurrection (p.81); she is the only person close
to him at the critical times that define his purpose, describe his fate and that will give rise to a new religion (Haag, 2016, pp.3-4). Mary is known as “the apostle to the apostles”, without her, and her female companions, who financed, supported, and spread the word of the new ministry, (pp.43-46) there simply would have been no Christianity. From a fledgling cult to an institutionalised religion, Catholicism changed as it developed from an all inclusive faith into patriarchal theism where a male god and male priests have dominion over women and Nature. There are many reasons for this: some are exegetical, some are theological, and some are socio-cultural (Laura & Chalender, 2012, p.175). As noted throughout this thesis, scholars have acknowledged that a male mythology super imposed by ‘gender elitism’, established and enforced patriarchy also social inequality.

Gaining political and military support from Constantine and the Roman Empire, the bishops of the church were convened at Nicea, in 325CE, to unify the faith and the empire (Litoujua, 2018, p.293). Eusebius sets the scene of a banquet: “The circumstances of which were splendid beyond description, having all the pomp, splendour, and royalty, attributed to absolute monarchy” (Eusebius as cited in Litoujua, 2018, p.293).

Biblical scholar Alfred Loisy (as cited in Litoujua, 2018), condemned as a “modernist by the Catholic Church”, pointed out that while Jesus preached the kingdom of God, what resulted instead was the “Church” (p.293) and absolute monarchy. Theological expert, and adviser to Vatican II, Gregory Baum (as cited in Litoujua, 2018) suggests that the problems associated with bureaucracies gives rise to the institutions well-being when it begins to overshadow the commitment to the institution’s function: “Sociologists have argued a dialectic begins to operate according to which the excessive concern for maintenance becomes in fact dysfunctional and undermines the institution’s well-being” (p.294).

Litoujua (2018) identifies how people are sacrificed for the good of the establishment, rules, regulations overshadow goals, “when the bureaucracy becomes an end in itself, then the social institution, even a religious one, becomes pathological – becoming structures of sin and in need of reform” (p.294). In a religious bureaucracy, ambition, and competition can be rife, stimulating jealousies and personality conflicts, if not manipulations and outright power-plays (p.295). Abuses of religious power have caused
untold suffering through the ages, including the long history of excommunications, heresy trials, religious inquisitions, and the crusades attest to the dilemma of power. In fact, the Catholic Church can be considered as the last absolute monarchy on earth (p.229). This form of iniquity comes with full Papal blessings and approval, albeit a far cry from the original Jesus Movement (Jackowski, 2004, p.41). To this day, notes Jackowski, “every pope is envisaged as pope of the world, a law unto himself, having absolute power, all in the name of God” (p.40). In this context, power can become addictive, and with it can come co-dependency. Litonjua (2018) posits that the entire Catholic family has become infected and dysfunctional (p.229). The failure of collegiality in the post-Vatican II (which was meant to correct the imbalance of power in the papacy) means that the Catholic Church continues to be autocratic and patriarchal (pp.299-300). Litonjua suggests that the social structures of patriarchy, such as religious institutions, are buttressed by ideologies, and systems of ideas and beliefs all of which have contributed to the subordination of women (p.305). Litonjua argues that ideology makes people ignorant of structural injustice: it blinds them to the dehumanisation and destruction caused by institutionalised violence (p.309). In this sense religion can become the worst ideological weapon. Injustice, discrimination, and exploitation are justified all in the name of God, (all of which has been extensively argued in previous chapters). The evil done can be driven by greed and ambition of the individual, or group of individuals, charged with making decisions for the institutions (pp.308-309), but those motives are mastered by the reputation of the institution.

On this level social sin meets personal sin. Like any institution, even a divine institution, there exists an element of good and bad: today the Catholic Church can only be governed in unity as one big bureaucracy argues Litonjua (2018, p.293). Nuzzi (2015), Yallup (2007, 2010), Parenti (2010), Jackowski, (2004), all add their voices to the corruption, and corridors of power which exists within the confines of the Catholic Church. All of the above authors address the culture of privilege, and sexual promiscuity that exists within the Catholic priesthood, and the confines of the Catholic Church itself (Jackowski, 2004; Yallup, 2010; Parent, 2010; Nuzzi, 2015; Litonjua, 2018). Research from Kahl (1971) notes, sex scandal after sex scandal erupted from monasteries and during the Middle Ages, in his De contempt mundi ‘Contempt of the World’, Pope Innocent III complained about the members of the clergy “who embraced Venus at night and worshiped the Virgin Mary in the morning” (p.80). The whole of the
Middle Ages is an attempt on the part of theologians to control and repress sexual urge, to have authority and dominion over man’s sex life, all of which is maintained by the Church, and yet the clergy did not practice the Church’s ruling on celibacy. Prostitution flourished while the papacy was in exile at Avignon (1309-1377) instead of the Papacies central location in Rome (p.80). What has changed if anything? Absolutely nothing, Karol Jackowski (2004), author and nun, did not initially want get involved with the latest Catholic priest scandal (p.1), yet was moved to write about the situation. Jackowski astutely points out how nuns are used to keeping private thoughts to themselves: their voices, however, were “noticeable silent to this whole affair” (p.1). There existed a belief that only the ‘priests knew the whole story’ but this was ‘wrong’ (p.1). Jackowski (2004) states that:

A culture of privilege, and sexual promiscuity exists within the priesthood that is as old as the Church itself – a moral theology that is ‘twisted’, a spirituality, so hypocritical in its obsession with a condemnation of the sexual sins of others, sins that now appear permissible only in the priesthood - priests who stand before their congregations ‘men of God’ appearing even ‘nobler than thou’ are laws unto themselves (p.11).

The sins of the Fathers, are being paraded before us like the “emperor with no clothes”, a story that we have read as children, “only this time we see” (Jackowski, 2004, p.11; Fiorenza & Haring, 1999, p.61). The following observations are at either end of the spectrum, in the commentary put forward by Publishers Weekly (2004), and Carcaterra (2004), in their subsequent review of Karol Jackowski’s book, The Silence We Keep (2004), which exposes the sexual scandal that exists within the Catholic priesthood. Publishers Weekly (2004) proffer that: “Her threads of truth get tangled up in the presentation. Evidence to support her claims are often anecdotal, or based on anonymous or secondary sources” (p.1).

It is worth noting that Jackowski (2004) does supply her audience with the facts, pointing out:

On January 4th, 2003, Bill Smithers of the Saint Louis Post Dispatch, reported on a national survey completed by Saint Louis University in 1996, in which a “minimum of 34,000 Catholic Nuns, or about 40% of all nuns in the USA have suffered some
form of sexual trauma”, victimised by priests, as well as nuns...The findings were published in religious journals in 1998, in spite of this the story was never picked up by the mainstream press (p.9).

In his press release on The Silence We Keep: A Nun’s View of the Catholic Priest Scandal, Lorenzo Carcaterra (2004) comments that:

Karol Jackowski, a nun since 1964, attests that the abuse uncovered thus far, represents the tip of the iceberg, and that until clerical silence is lifted and the truth revealed fully, abuse amongst the Church Fathers will remain. Jackowski suggests priests may not even be as celibate as believed, citing a 1990 study of priests sexual habits that reported that conservatively 20% of priests were sexually active with women, 20% were homosexual – 10% of whom were sexually active, 4% were of those with children rampant (Carcaterra, 2004, p.2).

Parenti (2010) adds his voice to the sexual crimes perpetrated by, and also repudiated by Catholic clergy noting: “Reports released by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops documented the abuse committed by 4,392 priests against thousands of children between 1950 and 2002. One in every ten priests ordained in 1970 was charged as a paedophile by 2002, and those were only the ones reported” (p.143).

In February 1994, Sister Maura O’Donohue provided a report to Cardinal Eduardo Martinez, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Religious Life, which outlined the sexual abuse of nuns by Catholic priests (O’Donohue as cited in Yallup, 2010, p.88). Sister O’Donohue, a physician in the Order of Medical Missionaries of Mary, had forty years of experience in pastoral and medical involvement. In her report titled Urgent Concerns for the Church in the Context of HIV/AIDS, she outlined her concerns on the incidences of priests and nuns contracting, and dying from “AIDS-related illnesses” (p.88). Her report irrefutably established a catalogue of sexual abuse covering a six year period relating to twenty six countries and covering five continents (p.89). The report detailed priests and bishops, exploiting and abusing their powers. Yallop (2010) notes “no positive action had been taken by the Holy See over seven years since it had first been made fully aware of this additional dimension of sexual abuse by Sister Maura O’Donohue and other experts” (p.90). We also need to take into account the cases of priests raping, sexually assaulting, abusing and exploiting young people, and children.
Add to this the complicity of bishops in covering up the crimes of their priests, transferring them from parish to parish, thus “spreading the disease [of abuse] and increasing the number of victims” (Parenti, 2010, p.143; Yalllup, 2010: Litonjua, 2018).

A key feature came to the fore in 2002, with the Vatican continuing “to whitewash the sex scandals” (Jackowski, 2004, p.48). An article appearing in the 2002 edition of *Vanity Fair*, quotes Richard Cardinal Cushing (a cited in Jackowski, 2004), who at the time was the Archbishop of Boston, by remarking: “Men, if you are going to do it, do it with a woman – don’t do it with another man. And if you get her pregnant, come to me – I’ll take care of it” (p.60). Parenti (2010) notes shocking revelations of sex crimes perpetrated by Catholic clergy, “far from being isolated misfits, the paedophile priests often have been well positioned as administrators, vicars, and parochial school officials, allowed to remain responsible posts sometimes even while involved in litigation” (pp.144-145).

Come forward and the whole world looks at celibacy within the Catholic Church and “can hardly control its laughter, or its sadness, the oldest and most sacred tradition has become a joke” (Jackowski, 2004, p.34). Litonjua (2018) contends there are many reasons given why people turn out to be paedophiles: some point to clericalism, and the culture which leads the priest to think that they are “special, and on a pedestal”, and therefore imperious having prerogatives above other men, thus “allowing them to engage in activities that ordinary men are not entitled to” (p.316). Others mention the narrow-minded, exclusively male, repressive climate, that avoids contact with women, while the importance of sexual purity together with forced celibacy has denied them “normal psycho-sexual development” (p.316). All of which are reasons for “possible misogyny...and perverted homosexuality, not homosexuality in itself” (p.316). Arguably, there is no question that the sexual abuse of minors is “simply the perversion of absolute monarchical power” (p.319). Pedersen (2017), in *The Pope, Power Plays and Women Priests*, notes that Pope Francis: “is restricting himself to removing most of the corrupt and abusive elements within the institution. It still remains to be seen whether he dares reform the church and its ministry even further (Pedersen, 2017, p.4; Christ, 2017b).
The Untold Story

Torjesen (1995) notes that the last thirty years of American scholarship has produced evidence substantiating women’s roles as deacons, priests, presbyters, and even bishops in Christian churches, dating from the first through the thirteenth century (p.2). Feminist theologian, Elizbeth Fiorenza (1989), *In Search of Women’s Heritage*, seeks to restore women’s stories in early Christian history but also “to reclaim this history as the history of women and men” (p.30). She argues, there is a need to reconceptualise early Christian theology which has been codified by men, resulting in women’s subjugation. Ruether (1981) asks why are women’s studies essential to the scholarship of Religious Education? (p.388). Feminist biblical interpretation of scripture has added an identification of the patriarchal context in which the text functioned (Thistlethwaite, 1989, p.304; Ruether, 1981). According to Thistlethwaite, Fiorenza, and Ruether restoration of women’s history must become part of a feminist interpretation of the Bible (Thistlethwaite, 1989, p.304; Fiorenza, 1989, p.30, Ruether, 1981, p.388). A reinterpretation of Biblical text is essential, supporting a more accurate perception of women’s situation, experience, and life, rather than the existing patriarchal paradigm which does not positively identify women’s leadership in early Christianity (Fiorenza, 1989, p.32, Thistlethwaite, 1989, p.304). One could argue that parochial Biblical scholars do not perceive the question as a serious problem or of great significance, seeing it as a “woman’s issue or problem”, being “trivial or marginal to academic enterprise”, but not in “the program of exegetical conferences or in the pages of an exegetical *Festschrift*” (Fiorenza, 1989, p.32; Morny, 1990, p.22). In 1994 Pope John Paul II presented an apostolic letter titled *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* to the Episcopate outlining the Catholic Church’s stance in regard to the ordination of women: “The Church does not consider herself authorised to admit women to priestly ordination...[the] reason is that in giving the Church her fundamental constitution, her theological anthropology—thereafter always followed by the Church’s Tradition—Christ established things in this way” (John Paul II, 1994, p.1). Green (1996) notes, that the ordination of women would constitute a breach of two thousand years of tradition, and be a contravention of the Catholic order of the Church (Green, 1996, p.346). Because the male priesthood represented the fatherhood of God, and the maleness of Christ, scripture required that only men should preside over the Eucharist (pp.346-347). It is
worth noting that the afore ideas did not originate with the Catholic Church, but was a
continuation of ideas originating from the creational mythology of Genesis 2 where
woman is taken out of man hereof emphising her difference to creation and inferiority.

During the same year, Dutch theologian, and priest, John Wijngaard (as cited in Allen,
1999) resigned in protest of Ad Tuendam Fidem, in the wake of the papal document
tightening its grip on the ban on women priests, for Wijngaards “I could not represent
an institution that was telling people they could not be part of the church if they
believed in ordaining women” (p.11), especially after the commentary made by the
then, and future pope, Cardinal Ratzinger (2002), asserting the teaching on women
priests is infallible: “they are at odds with the doctrine on the magisterium of the
successor of Peter, put forward by the First and Second Vatican Councils, and they
thereby fail to recognise that the teachings of the supreme pontiff on doctrines to be
held definitively by all the faithful are irreformable (p.2).

Here lays the root premis regarding the question on the ordination of women,
ortodoxy places Peter at the head of the Church, but Jesus was closer to Mary
Magdalene than any of the other disciples, it was through Mary and the other female
disciples that the new religion moved forward into the world as argued in the previous
chapter. In Did Christ rule Out Women Priests, Winjaards bases his argument on
scripture, while ascertaining the question: Did Christ rule out women priests?
(Wijngaards, 1997). His answer is contra to other academics and feminist scholars: “The
fact that Christ chose only men, to function on his apostolic team, was not determined
by his own specific preference, but by the social pressures of his time. In the
circumstances Christ could not have appointed women to the priestly task. But in no
way did he at any time rule out the possibility of women being ordained as priests”
(p.39).

Women in the Roman Empire were subject to Roman family law “based on the
principle that the father of the family (pater familias) had complete control over the
children and his wife. This was defined as paternal power (patria protestas)
(Wijngaards, 2001, p.4; Dixon 1992). Roman law in the 3rd and 4th century offered
more protection to women but overall her inferior status remained the same, thus it is
easy to see how “this devaluation of women slipped into church thinking” (Wijngaards,
2001, p.5). Ambrosiaster (as cited in Wijnaards, 2001) asserts that women had no kind
of authority in the public space. Why? “Because civil law forbade it: woman does not bear the image of God because she is manifestly subject to man as we can see from civil law. The position of women is not really decided by any Christian tradition or inspired text, but the pagan Roman law which was believed as normative” (p.5).

Both Church and civil law enshrined the inferior status of women and therefore could not be envisaged in the leadership role demanded of a bishop or priest. Here argues Wijngaards (2001), “we find the true origin of the so called ‘Christian’ tradition banning women from the ministry (p.6). Contra to Wijngaards’ argument, Thistlethwaite (1989) proposes that “the New Testament authors are not uniformly in agreement on the role of the twelve [however] the theological function of the twelve is to represent the twelve tribes” (p.310). In picking twelve men as his apostles, Jackowski suggests “Jesus fulfils the Old Testament prophecy of the Messiah appointing heads of the Twelve Tribes of Israel” (Jackowski, 2004, p.28), which symbolically establishes Jesus’ legitimacy for a Jewish populace, in the same way that two of the Gospels start with a genealogy. In this way a bridge is established between the Israelite past and the hoped for future in which all Jews and gentiles would be united as the “People of God”, thus providing a symbolic role, not an administrative one, as evidenced by the fact that they were not replaced by the church after their deaths (Thistlethwaite, 1989, pp.310-311). Thistlethwaite adds “much of the New Testament material leads one to believe that the circle around Jesus was in fact quite fluid and the inclusion of women was quite deliberate on his behalf” (pp.310-311). The New Testament is full of stories of how close Jesus was to women: they remained with him “through his passion, death, and resurrection” (Jackowski, 1989, p.38). They did not run away in fear for their lives as his male counterparts did at the time of Jesus arrest (Schaberg, 2004; Meyer & de Boer, 2004; Hinsdale, 2011; Lee, 2018a). It was the women, states Jackowski, “Mary Magdalene, ‘the other Mary’, Joana, and Salome who cleansed, anointed and prepared his body for burial, and women were at the tomb on Easter morning” (p.38; Haag, 2016; Schaberg, 2004; Lee, 2018a). Jackowski contends “Mary Magdalene is the first priest of the early Church to proclaim the risen Christ”, she then explains how “Mary his mother is the first priest of all, the first to give us literally the Body and Blood of Christ” (Jackowski, 2004, p.34, Wijngaards, 2001, p.2; Schaberg, 2004; Lee, 2018a).

Similarly Mary T. Malone (as cited in Angert-Quilter, 2014) writes:
After the resurrection, Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Lazarus preached throughout the Holy Land...until they aroused the anger of the Jews. All three were shoved out to sea in a rudderless boat, which eventually deposited them in Marseilles. Here, their apostolic lives of preaching continued, and some artistic representation would indicate that Martha and Lazarus became bishops (p.9).

An article appeared in 1982, *Vetera Christianorum*, where Professor Otranto (1991) attacked the “thorny problem of the priesthood of women in antiquity, taking a cue from an epistle of Pope Gelasius I (492-496)” (p.1). Gelasius’ treatise became part of a spirited debate by the “declaration *Inter insignories* of Pope Paul VI” which confirmed the “no” of the church in the admission of women to the priesthood and the episcopate (pp.1-2). Otranto sites “the entire tradition of the church has been built upon the notion that ‘Only man’, through his natural resemblance to Christ, can express sacramentally the role of Christ himself in the Eucharist” (p.3). In this respect, the *Apostolic Constitutions, Book VIII*, no.19, provides evidence to the contrary in the translation from the Anti-Nicene Fathers which provides a reference to the discourse, concerning the deaconess, in *The Constitution of Bartholomew*:

*Concerning a deaconess, I [the apostle] Bartholomew make this constitution: Oh bishop, though shalt lay thy hands upon her in the presence of the presbytery, and of the deacons and the deaconesses, and shall say the prayer for the ordination of a deaconess...Oh Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...didst ordain women to be keepers of Thy holy gates, do Thou now also look down upon Thy servant, who is to be ordained in the order of deaconess...cleanse from the filthiness of flesh and spirit that she may worthily discharge the work which is committed to her in Thy glory* (The Apostolic Constitutions, Book V11 (n.d.), p.3).

Evidence of the existence of women priests is further attested by Atto, Bishop of Vercilli, who lived between the ninth and tenth centuries (Otranto, 1991, p.11). Among his writings and collections are records of not only men, but women were also ordained in the ancient Christian church (p.11). They were leaders of their community, “they assumed the duty of preaching, directing and teaching...these three duties define the role of the sacrament of priesthood” (p.11). An ancient Coptic prayer of commemoration for the departed reads: “Remember the bishops, the priests the deacons....the women who
exercise the diaconate...referring to the women (Ontranto, 1991, p.3; Torjeson, 1995, p.3; Raming, 1981, p.5).

In this respect, it could be argued that throughout the centuries, by accident or collusion, there has been a “predetermined interpretation of the paucity of testimonies regarding the existence of sacerdotal ministry by women” (Otranto, 1991, p.11).

The Role of Women in Early Christian Beginnings

Giogio Otranto, an Italian professor of church history, (as referred to in the previous section) has shown through papal letters, and inscriptions, women participated in the Catholic priesthood for the first thousand years of the churches history (Torjesen, 1995, p.2). There is evidence provided by feminist theologians concerning women as deacons, priests, and bishops beginning in the first century BCE, continuing through to the sixth century CE, and even surviving as late as the twelfth century (Rue, 2009; Sellner, 1989-1990; Ruether, 1998; Stafford, 2001; Swan, 2001; Angert-Quilter, 2014). New Testament sources provide a history for early Christian beginnings as they mention women were both followers of Jesus, and were also leading members of early Christian communities (Fiorenza, 1989). Research from Fiorenza, established that travelling missionaries were central to the early Christian mission which depended on special mobility, and patronage of women who were leaders in both areas (Fiorenza, 1984). Worship was conducted in church houses long before Paul’s arrival, and as Jewish-Christian missionaries, such women might have belonged to Christian communities in Galilee, Jerusalem, or Antioch which stand at the very beginnings of the Christian missionary movement (Fiorenza, 1984). Without question, they were ‘equal’ and sometimes “superior to Paul in their work for the gospel” (Fiorenza, 1984, p.161). As Christianity developed, the second century gave women initial importance, by way of example, take Phoebe, as deaconess of the Church of Cenchrae (Romans16:1), or who Junia is referred to as an apostle (Romans 16:1). The author of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, describes the image of Thecla as a woman missionary, who is commissioned by Paul, to “go and teach the word of God” (Fiorenza, 1984; Ruether, 1998). In this way, proffers Angert-Quilter (2014), the story of Thecla is used by Roman Catholic women to argue for the ordination of women (p.5). (See for example Francine Cardman,
“Sisters of Thecla: Knowledge Power, and Change in the Church”, in Prophetic Witness: Women’s Strategies for Reform). Angert-Quilter suggests: “There are those who think of the Acts of Thecla as a rehabilitated text. It was at one time thought of as apocryphal but to a certain extent that is no longer the case in certain circles. Such rehabilitating may serve a feminist agenda” (p.5). Research from Angert-Quilter (2014) accords with other scholars in regard to Thecla, “What she has done will be told...as long as history is written by the winners, the marginalised, and subjugated cannot afford not to have a written history” (p.5).

At the beginning of the third century, women in Carthage still appealed to the apostle Thecla for defining women’s authority to teach and baptise (Fiorenza, 1984). All this time women are subject to bias, patriarchy is established as divine law, yet the worst prejudice existed in the Latin speaking regions of the old Roman Empire as conflict mounted over women baptising, teaching, and participating at the Eucharistic meal (Wijngaards, 1977; Torjesen, 1995; Miles, 1991). The Latin Fathers: Tertulian, Augustine of Hippo, Jerome, Ambrosiaster, all of which were opposed to women participating in church ministries (Wijngaards, 2001, p.3). Wijngaard’s study found that the synod of Orange in Gaul (441CE); the Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua (late fifth century); the synods of Epaon (517CE) and Auxerre (588CE); promoted the abolishment of women to the diaconate, forbidding women to touch sacred objects, or receive communion in the hand (p.3). Bishop Theodore of Canterbury in Britain (died 690CE) forbade women, lay or religious, to enter church or receive communion during the time of menstruation (p.3).

**Women in Early Celtic Christianity**

If we turn our attention to the Celtic Church, Woods’ (1985) research discovered it flourished for many centuries before being subsumed into the Roman Church. Woods notes “Celtic Christianity was not diocesan but monastic in form, its spirituality was more familial, personal, and democratic rather than curial, legal and republican (p.246). This spirituality was more richly compatible with the Celtic structure and values of Celtic culture than was the “legalistic diocesan form” (p.246). The mystical element of Celtic spirituality “became manifest with its paradoxical tensions between the sense of
nearness and farness of God” (p.248). According to Harrington (2002), a number of Irish women are counted among the Irish missionary saints of the early sixth century. In her book, *Women in a Celtic Church: Ireland 450-1150*, Harrington notes that “the annals of Ulster record (retrospectively) the obits of Saints Brigit (CE524, 526, 528); Ita (570CE), and Monenna (517CE), who were reported as the founders of the nunneries of Kildare, Kildedy, and Killevy respectively” (p.39). In this sense, these women served as evangelists to their own people: “Whether they modelled themselves on a British inspiration to do so we cannot know, for no record survives of female missionaries going from Britain to Ireland. All early Lives show Irish protagonists as spending much time travelling, spreading the Christian message and founding churches” (p.39).

Sometime in the 1180s, Sellner (1989-90) notes that “the medieval churchman, pilgrim, and story-teller Gerald of Wales, visited Kildare, Ireland, made famous, he says by the glorious Brigid” (p.402). In his tours of Ireland Gerald writes of how he found Brigid’s fire, said to be inextinguishable: “It is not that it is strictly speaking inextinguishable, but that the nuns and the holy women have so carefully and diligently kept and fed it with enough material that through all the years from the time of the virgin saint it has never been extinguished” (p.402).

Brigid or Brigit (the spelling is inter-changeable), is a powerful woman and Christian saint, who is associated with the Celtic Goddess Brigit (Sellner, 1989-90, p.402). She is a study in liminality for she lives on the boundaries between pagan mythology and Christian spirituality, “between what was and what will be” (p.403). One of the reasons her leadership grew to such prominence was that the pagan Celts believed in the equality of women, having similar legal rights to men, unlike the prevailing ideas of the ‘desert Christians’, or the countries bordering the Mediterranean (p.405). Brigid is associated with monastic life, and ministry, alongside of fire, “a ‘flame of holiness’ that continues to burn, giving us light even though the fire of which Gerald spoke of has been extinguished” (p.404). In similar fashion, Jackowski (2004) found that the Roman Goddess Vesta is worshipped as the divine guardian of fire, home, and hearth (p.86). Like Brigit, Vesta’s sacred fire burnt in the Temple of the Vestal Virgins, “it was their sacred duty to attend the sacred fire both day and night never taking their eyes off the eternal flame” (p.87: Sellner, 1989-90, p.402). Beyond the virginity of both Goddesses lies the ‘sacred soul’ of all the Virgin Goddesses, (including the Virgin Mary), and
therein lies the virgin soul of the sisterhood (Jackowski, 2004, p.90). What’s more, Brigid acts as a ‘soul friend’ which is an ancient Celtic tradition of spiritual guidance: “She has something to teach us about women’s leadership as it emerged in the Celtic church – her story and legends reveal much about the actuality and potential of women’s spiritual power “ (p.403).

In his work *Brigit of Kildare* (1989-90), Sellner notes, Brigid’s cult remains popular into the Middle-Ages as hundreds of churches and wells are named after her, “not only in Celtic lands, but abroad as well” (p.405). After Patrick, Brigid is the most popular saint, fittingly known as “Mary of the Gael” (p.405). We do not know if she was ordained, as we understand that term today, however she was clearly quite a powerful spiritual guide and leader for many (p.405).

It is worth noting that women, even powerful women, of the early Middle Ages have their stories told and chronicled by men, women live in all-male monastic communities (Stafford, 2001, p.401). In *The Problem of the Ordination of Women in the Early Christian Priesthood* (1991), Otranto writes:

> At the beginning of the sixth century, not long after the Galician epistle, we hear of women who are actively participating in the liturgy. The case is mentioned in 511 by three bishops of Gaul who sent an epistle to the Breton priests Lovocatus, and Catihernus to criticise, for allowing women during Eucharistic services to take the chalice in their hands to distribute the blood of Christ to the people (p.8).

Meister and Stump (2010) comment on how “the bishops severely condemn the actions of the priest”, ordering them to “remember tradition”, threatening them with banishment if they continue “to be assisted by those women [conhospitae], with whom they were living with as well” (p.217). Celtic monastic communities of both men and women, (some married) (Woods, 1985, p.247), were seeded across Celtic countries by Celtic evangelists, and in this instance, this may have been what the three bishops were referring to, as Celtic Christianity was some-what different to Roman Christianity, as Meister and Stump refer to Hilda of Whitby as having “the authority in the office of bishop in the region” (Meister & Stump, 2010, p.217). Hild, or Hilda of Whitby (614-680) is renowned for the success of her double monastery (one for men and one for women) at Whitby in the kingdom of Northumbria in England (p.217). Meister and
Stump suggest: “Almost all we know of Hilda comes from the venerable Bede, monk of Wearmouth and Jarrow, author of the *Ecclesiastical History of the Gens Anglorum*, there may have been other sources behind him but they have been lost” (p.217).

As Dunn (2000) writes it is Bede who “records how Hilda, as abbess, functioned as a counsellor to both commoners, and royalty, [residing] over the Synod of Whitby in 664, where the differences between ‘Celtic’ and ‘Roman’ customs of Easter, and tonsure were discussed” (p.203; Ranft, 2000, p.61; Meister & Stump, 2010, p.217). Watt’s line of enquiry differs to others scholars by arguing:

Bede adapts Hild’s life to fit his own agenda, part of which seems to be to remove traces of Hild’s scholarly community...He does not mention explicitly that Hild was personally responsible for the spiritual educating of the men who became bishops (Watt, 2013, p.543). Watt notes that perhaps “Hild did not fit comfortably to Bede’s expectations of female sanctity, [he] may have been unsettled by Hild’s public and political life” (pp.543-554). Yet, if we look at Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* the monk does acknowledge Hild by stating:

> So great was her prudence that not only ordinary folk, but kings and princes come to ask her advice in their difficulties and they would take it. Those under her direction were required to make a thorough study of Scriptures and occupy themselves in good works, to such good effect that many of them were found fitted for Holy Orders and the service for God’s alter. Five men from this monastery later became bishops – Bosa, Aetla, Ofifor, John and Wilfred – all of them men of outstanding merit and holiness (Bede, Trans. 1968, p.247).

Significantly, the religious and the political are profoundly imprecated in one another, as Hild’s career indicates (Watt, 2013, p543). For Bede, Hilda was a holy woman, mother of a religious community where a string of bishops where trained under her aegis. She was deeply involved in questions of Episcopal appointments, in matters of secular as well as ecclesiastical politics (Stanford, 2001, p.401).
Female Ascetics/Becoming Male

In the *Gospel of Thomas* 114, Simon Peter is at odds with Mary Magdalene noting that women are “not worthy of life” However, Jesus intervenes saying “*I myself shall lead her in order to make her male...for every women who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Schaberg, 2004, p.156).

Celtic women were not the first to express their leadership, to spread and develop monastic Christianity (Sellner, 1989-90, p.405). Macrina the younger was a fourth century Christian ascetic who founded one of the earliest monastic communities at Annisa near the Black Sea (Kidd, 2006, p.1, Swan, 2001, p.129). According to Swan, Macrina was the original inspiration and genius behind this development (Swan, 2001, p.128). Born in 327CE, Macrina, the eldest of many children, beleaguered her brothers, especially Basil, and Gregory of Nyssa, until they accepted baptism (Swan, 2001, p.129; Kidd, 2006, p.1). Known for her “clear-head”, Macrina gave council during “difficult times of political and theological upheaval in the church” (Swan, 2001, p.131). In classic philosophical fashion, states Swan: “Macrina ponders the nature of the human soul and what happens after death. Her teachings reflect both the depth of her understanding and her use of common human experience to express her thought” (pp.131-132). Her brothers acknowledge her as the primary influence in their theological education, while Basil, known later as the Great, is credited as the founder of Eastern Monasticism, in this sense took the glory “for what Macrina actually began” (p.129). Gregory wrote in great detail about the life of his sister, after referring to her as “a women” he questioned himself: “If indeed she should be styled woman for I do not know whether it is fitting to designate her by her sex, who so surpassed her sex” (Kidd, 2006, p.1).

Kidd (2006) asks, is Gregory’s hesitancy to call his sister ‘woman’ indicative of patriarchal bias towards the inferiority of women? Is Gregory implying that it was necessary to overcome her gender in order to acquire success as an acetic? As Kidd has shown, “Gregory loved and admired his sister, his reverence for her appears to be at the cost of her femininity” (p.1). In order to acknowledge the distinctive features of the feminine patriarchy has to redefine women’s gender in order to become male, or in the
instance of Hypatia the threatened male kills feminine ingenuity and wisdom as argued in the previous chapter.

Research from Kidd (2006) explains how Christian writers understood gender in consideration of the Genesis account of creation, and the fall of humanity from Eden. This story’s implications for the first woman are seen as being valid for all women, albeit playing an important role in early Christian asceticism, with its purpose of returning to that Paradise (pp.5-10). Virginity is of particular importance to the early ascetics, representing a way to begin the transformation and, “to participate to some extent in the pre-Fall glory of Adam” (p.11). Miles (1991) asserts “women who practiced asceticism are called ‘male’, an interpretation of their efforts that women apparently accepted” (p.xii). Schaberg (2004) notes, women as women are outsiders. At issue here and elsewhere is whether women as women “could be seen as part of the human ideal, in or as the Human One” (Schaberg, 2004, pp.156-57). Vasilesco’s (2013) article found that “the desert was the locus where these wonderful women attempted to establish a fervent connection to God” (p.359). An amma is experienced person, leading an ascetic life, reputed for her wisdom, beginning her life in a convent, and some time later, choosing the desert for her retirement (Vasilesco, 2013, Kidd, 2006). Larkin (2002) notes, “in this desert setting Christian holiness was a kind of white martyrdom...the desert was a graphic symbol of the emptiness of life and the otherness of God” (p.370). Likewise, Celtic Christianity practiced what came to be known as “green martyrdom” and like the desert ascetics, lived in remote, isolated places alone with God, while “white martyrdom” suggests Wood, was “seen as a quest for voluntary exile, and death, in an alien land out of love for the homeless Christ” (Woods, 1985, p.247). Another feature of an amma is that she taught by example, rather than by her words, addressing openly, and boldly not only her own disciples, but also “monks, pilgrims, clergymen and lay-rulers alike with unsurpassed courage” (Vasilesco, 2013, p.360). Vasilesco points out how Amma Sarah scolded two hermits of Pilusius in their attempt to humiliate her: “Indeed I am a woman by my nature, but not by my mind” (p.360). Willi Braun, Professor of Religion at the University of Alberta (as cited in Kidd, 2006), argues that the early church was primarily androcentric, and it is only through the woman “becoming a male” that gender difference was absolved (p.2). He supports his argument by citing Galatians 3:28, whereby Paul used the masculine form for the word “one”, that male and female are one in Christ. The “one” which the two
genders were urged to become was not androgynous, but the masculine ideal (pp.2-3).
Braun and his followers hold that women became equal to men only by becoming men:
The belief in masculine superiority was not only maintained but strengthened...the rejection of traditional female roles is the rejection of femininity...sometimes they even dressed like men” (p.3).
Contra to Braun’s argument, Kidd (2006) points out how Braun’s theories contain “two rather large mistakes” when reading fourth century texts, Braun (as cited in Kidd, 2006) puts a “current understanding of gender”, while ignoring the theological assumptions of early Christian writers, “it neglects to situate gender transformation in its true context – asceticism” (p.3). Kidd situates her argument within the parameters of the social norms of Greco-Roman patriarchy, deeming the “early Christian church was progressive in its understanding of gender” (p.2), and by contrast not misogynistic. One has to wonder given the Church Fathers attitudes to women, inasmuch as Thecla cut off her hair and put on men’s clothing; Pelagia “dressed as a man” and joined a monastery were she passed as a male and her gender was discovered only upon her death (Miles, 1991, p.55). Come forward for a moment in time, the young French saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897), “did not challenge the reality that ordination was impossible for her, and yet, at the same time, she held confidently to the view that god called her to the priesthood” (Massam, 2012, p.226). Miles (1991) draws attention to the “Valentinians, and members of the Hellenistic philosophical schools agreed that for women to cultivate a religious identity was to become male” (p.56). Similarly, “becoming male” was also celebrated by the Gnostics (p.56) despite the proclivity of feminine imagery within Gnostic text. Considering the facts, one could argue the qualities promoted by Christianity, especially those surrounding women, is the renunciation of her sexuality, and femininity, (socially seen as evil), in her quest to become male (Daly, 1973, p.84).
Women have to renounce their sexuality in order to take holy orders, to deny their gender by becoming male rather than expressing herself as a woman, albeit prone to sin and corruption.
The Discrepancy Surrounding Sexual Difference

Conceptually women have served as a distinguishing symbol for deviance and sexual depravity within theological expression and writings. Mary Douglas (2001) in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* notes:

> The body served as a map of society...indeed, the body received such pride of place in history of Christian studies that recently there has emerged, in reaction, a disinclination to emphasise it: after all, had not men’s arguments concerning the fragility and evils of the female body been a factor that contributed to women’s subjugated position for centuries (p.409).

Clark (2001) comments in his discourse on *Women, Gender, and Church History*, with regard to how the theological writings of Anthanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose of Milan contest:

> when the confession of the full and equal divinity of Father, Son, and Spirit became the first sine qua non of doctrinal ‘orthodoxy’, a new style of masculinity was authorised that heightened the claims of patriarchal authority while also cutting manhood loose from the traditional fleshly and familial moorings; a radical transcendent manhood, now claimed the place on the scale of virility...these Father’s Trinitarian reflections served as a focus for the establishment of sexual difference - even while they adamantly denied such ‘generalisations’ at the divine level (p.421).

Patriarchal consciousness seeks to ascend to the elevated realms of male pure spirit and utter transcendence where nothing gets soiled, or rots, or dies. The objective is to get away from the natural, ‘the unsacred’, away from woman’s fleshy bodies, away from nature, and dying into the spiritual realms of a masculine Godhead. Christianity condemned the sanctity of sacred sexuality and it was the Churches mission to extinguish the fires of the Goddess forever. In this sense, the entire tradition of the Church has fostered a male centred gender-bias, which cemented the fact that women cannot symbolise God, since they were born in sin, and do not reflect the image of God: “to bring a female into the realm of the divine, is to bring sexuality back into the realm of the divine, from which it has been banished since the advent of monotheism” (Torjesen, 1995, p.266; Wijngaards, 1977).
Over time, states Rue (2009), women were gradually excluded from church leadership (p.4). The twelfth century saw the consolidation of church power and ecclesial organisation into Canon Law; Gratian, a 12th century Bolognian, stipulated, “only baptised males can receive the sacrament of holy orders” (p.4). The “Decretum Gratian”, is based on the mid twelfth century collection of sources, by Gratian, forbidding women from assuming any liturgical function within the sanctuary, and by content, “like the so-called Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua, going back as far as Leviticus 12:1ff.; 15:19ff.” (Raming, 1981, p.3). Raming notes, that the argument promotes a low opinion of women because of their sex; no access to the sanctuary is allowed; no touching of sacred vessels or Eucharistic elements; no teaching, no preaching; “Man’s God created superiority, [and therefore] has to be protected from the pagan inroads of a female priesthood” (p.3). One hundred years after Gratian, there appeared the Decretals of Pope Gregory IX (1234) (p.3). Thomas Aquinas adds his voice to his fellow bigots, “women’s defects which are not only of the body, but include inferior capacities for intellect and virtue, should confine her to the lower ranks of the blessed” (Ruether, 1998, p.97). Apart from the misogyny already noted by male exegesis, there is a further motive – “the protection of celibacy” (Raming, 1981, p.3). After hundreds of years obsessing around celibacy, sexuality, and sexual pleasure the Catholic Church has exploded with every conceivable form of sexual misconduct, and abuses of power (Littonjua, 2018; Jackowski, 2004). The notion that women served as markers for deviance, and sexual depravity in early modernity is now “a common place” (Clark, 2001, p.413). And yet, on a far deeper level, such blatant hypocrisy inferred by the Church Fathers, albeit a law unto themselves, justifies the situation regarding its own sinfulness: “when Rome continues to block any major reforms, when faced with its own soulful decadence, the papacy, as it appears to be doing now, shows no desire or inclination to reform” (Jackowski, 2004, p.48; Christ, 2017b). However, for the very first time Pope Francis has had to admit that the Catholic Church has a problem surrounding sexual abuse of children, religious women, women and vulnerable adults (The Conversation, 2019). In late November 2018, a group of female theologians called the Vioces of Faith, influenced by the #MeToo movement convened a meeting in Rome to share and discuss their stories of sexual harassment and abuse at the hands of predatory priests and “decry the patriarchy of the Catholic hierarchy” (Phillips, 2019).
The Ordination of Women

For centuries, the second creation story found within Genesis 2-3 is the perfect foundation myth for patriarchal Christianity. This version of the creation is used by the Church to “deny women access to the ministry and authority”, confining them to the “helper roles of parish and family” (Hollyday, 1994, p.3). Canonists, and theologians, have not only denied that woman could be ordained, but also alleged women had never been ordained – this is the present day position of the Vatican (Rue, 2009, p.4). The Vatican’s 1976, Declaration on the Question of Admitting Women to the Priesthood, justifies its exclusion of women from the priesthood on the grounds that “the female body does not resemble the male body of Christ” (Torjesen, 1995; Wijngaards, 1997; Otranto, 1991). Raming in Equal or Other in the Ordination of Women notes, “a frequent argument put forth against women entering the priesthood is her inappropriateness, the unsuitability of a woman’s ‘nature’, her ‘otherness’, or ‘difference’ for this calling” (Raming, 1981, pp.1-2; Goldenberg, 1989; Torjesen, 1995). Against this backdrop, Raming (1981) questions “how should we evaluate the formula, equal in worth/different in nature” (p.2) and consequences for a women’s place in the church? A few examples are suggested by Raming to illustrate how this ‘essence of woman’ is described when her exclusion from the priesthood is discussed:

*The male is more suitable for teaching... he is by nature more capable of handling the exertions of mental labour. He is more suited to lead because he is more intellectual... Woman is excluded from the priesthood not because of her less worth, but because she is different... Only the male nature can be incorporated in ordination of divine life. In the order of creation man came first* (p.2).

As time goes by there is an increasing tendency for supporters of the “masculine argument” to insist that their “anti-feminine” position is not discriminatory, but natural, i.e. “otherness legitimises subordination, based on created difference in nature between men and women” (Raming, 1981, p.4; Massam, 2012). In a formal response to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Pope Paul VI, 1975, disconnected sacramental priesthood from the consideration of human rights, replying that it would “introduce a grave difficulty if the Church of England ordained women” (Massam, 2012, p.232). Massam contends that the pope’s argument against ordination did not rely on “Pauline teachings
about headship, or views of woman as being inferior that had been held by Aquinas and others, but distinct grounds identified as significant in the development of doctrine” (p.232). In this sense the definitive doctrine according to the Sacred Scripture of Christ in which the choosing of his apostles only came from among men; the practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; ordination to the priesthood is reserved only to men as they imitate Christ, and only men can celebrate ‘Mass’ and other ‘sacraments’. The ordination of women is consistently at odds with the teaching authority of Peter, since the Pope is his successor the exclusion of women is in accordance with God’s plan for his Church (Pope John Paul II, 2002, p.2). The misleading title Priestly Ordination (Ordinatio sacerdotalis) in strict Roman diction should be called ‘The Non-Ordination of Women’ was merely meant to remove the last doubt about the Roman position (Fiorenza & Häring, 1999; Raming, 1981).

In this respect, 2002 saw seven women going against Pope John Paul’s encyclical; known as the “Danube Seven”, these feisty women became ordained on the river Danube – they were excommunicated within six months (Rue, 2009; Allen, 2002). John Allen (2002), correspondent to the Vatican wrote the Church authorities rejected the credentials and validity of their ordination, based on Church teachings (p.2). According to Allen reaction was that: “the project was absurd, comparing women wanting to be a priest with a man wanting to give birth” (p.4).

In an Open Letter to Pope Benedict XVI and the Catholic Bishops of Australia, dated July 2011, Catholics for Renewal, wrote, “we can no longer accept the patriarchal attitude towards women in our Church, and we fear that an extended claim to infallibility is stifling discussion on many important issues” (Massam, 2012, p.232). Anglican Bishop, Peter Carnley (201), suggests “that the Vatican’s position has hardened over the course of the last two decades under the leadership of continuing conservative Popes using juridical and deductive methods of argument” (p.175).

Traditionally the office of cardinal has belonged to men, nonetheless, Fiorenza and Häring in The Emperor With No Clothes, argues “those fighting for the ordination of wo/men ought to organise for achieving the goal of cardinalship” (Fiorenza & Häring, 1999, p.62). The authors opine: “The office of cardinal was instituted to provide a court for the pope. Hence the cardinals are called the princes of the church” (p.65). No ordination is required for this important office either by scripture or tradition (p.65).
Evidence from Fiorenza and Häring suggests that the office of cardinal does not go back to Jesus, or the apostles (p.65). Women’s demand to become cardinals does not require the manipulation of scripture, “nor engender the Christological heresy of androcentrism, as distinct from political power that prohibits the discussion of wo/men priestly ordination” (p.65). The authors note there is no evidence that the office of cardinal goes back to either Jesus or to the apostles. There is a long stream of male tradition however the tradition is of hierarchy’s making. The demand to become cardinals suggests Fiorenza and Häring, “does not generate scriptural manipulation nor engender the Christological heresy of androcentrism as distinct from political power that prohibits the discussion of wo/men priestly ordination and must resort of legitimisation” (p.62). The idea of women as cardinals would be a democratic way of healing the Catholic Church, thus removing the “misogynistic virus” that has paralysed the Church (p.65). Naturally, declares Fiorenza, “equity would demand that all cardinals should be wo/men, as long as bishops must remain men” (p.65). Instead Fiorenza and Häring state: “let us get ready for the next Consistorium when wo/men cardinals will elect a new successor of Peter or – [as the authors would have it] – the successor of Mary of Magdala” (p.65).

Predictably such a call drew a negative response from the Vatican. Jesuit Father Frederico Lombardi, the director of the Holy See Press Office, commented in the Irish Times, stated it was “theologically and theoretically possible” for a woman to become a cardinal, while Pope Francis labelled the idea as “nonsense” (McElwee, 2013, p.1). Father Lombardi however, did not rule the suggestion out:

While cannon law currently specifies that a cardinal must be either a priest or a bishop, some have also wondered whether the appointment of female cardinals might be a reform Pope Francis is considering (McElwee, 2013, pp.1-2).

The last thirty years of American scholarship have produced an amazing range of evidence for women’s roles as deacons, priests, presbyters, and even bishops in Christian churches from the first through the thirteenth century (Torjesen, 1995, p.2). The controversy suggests Torjesen, “over women’s ordination in the last half of the twentieth century has occasioned interesting questions having to do with women’s roles, female character, sexuality and the gender of God” Intense conflicts over women’s femininity, and sexuality, have divided conventions, councils and congregations so deeply that schisms have occurred (p.2). If God is thought of as male, people tend to
equate power with maleness hence, if females were to represent God, then femaleness would be equated with power (p.4) and not power over.

**Sacred Clothing and the Complication of Women’s Bodies**

In this context, further examples of discrimination are provided through the lens of dress, both in and out of the Anglican priesthood: “Women were excluded from the history of clerical dress, and were only permitted to be deaconesses from 1861, but this was not an ordained role. In 1987 women were admitted to the Order of Deacon, from this time, women were admitted to Holy Orders” (Page, 2014, p.2). Page examines the integration of women priests in the Church of England through the lens of dress, as women’s ordination to the priesthood was only sanctioned in 1992. Page based her findings on in-depth interviews with seventeen Anglican clergy women; voicing their concerns over complex clothing regimes, traditionally associated with the male body, which now had to be negotiated (p.2). “A woman shall not be clothed with man’s apparel, neither shall a man use woman’s apparel: for he is abominable before God that doeth these things” (Deuteronomy 22:5).

New clothing had to be worked out, such as the clerical shirt and collar, they were encouraged to show restraint in their clothing, and called to “wear the colour blue, symbolising the colour associated with the long-suffering Virgin Mary” (Page, 2014, p.5). By 1994 they were admitted to the Order of Priesthood, now the attire of priests became fully available to women: the wearing of the chasuble and stole over each shoulder (p.5).

As the priesthood has been historically associated through “the embodied male”, Page (2014) argues that gender is difficult to see when only “the masculine is present, a woman’s body can be problematic or seen out of place, inasmuch as they would taint holy objects by their touch and therefore lack the holy dispositions” (pp.5-14). In this respect, women’s clothing is highly scrutinised as when women navigate a masculine culture feminine attire takes on a profane status, and constitute a “distraction to worshipping space” (p.9). Women’s bodies “contaminate” sacred space, and in effect, they have to “neutralise their bodies” by appearing to be as “inconspicuous as possible” downplaying their sexuality, and “conforming to male gender regimes” (p.9). Sacred
dress is disassociated from the profane world, and is established as being part of the sacred realm, thus fashion can be a dangerous territory for women (p.10). Research from Page illustrates that many clerical garments have their origins in classical Greek dress: “Cassocks can be seen as emasculating, they are dresses, richly ornate, linking them with feminine attire. While men in feminised attire are usually ridiculed, in the church such attire has cemented and solidified male power, based on the traditional exclusion of female bodies. The attire has been designed exclusively for men” (p.12).

Women complain about the indignity of the dress being “too big – they drag on the floor – I am frightened I will knock something over” (Page, 2014, p.12). In this sense, women are not being fully integrated into the church, if women are not given clothes that properly fit symbolically it says that, “women are unable to fill the shoes of men, and participate in the sacred role convincingly” (p.12). Clerical clothing is also a means for males in consolidating power (p.12) in the same way in which God usurped the powers of the Goddess; man usurped women’s clothes as a symbol of power and then argued that women are not fit to wear such clothing.

**The Historical Right for Ordination**

Research from Linsay (2012, pp. 3-4) notes:

- 1853 the first woman was ordained in the Congregational Church in the United States
- 1862 the first deaconess was ‘set apart’ in the Church of England
- 1870 five women were ordained in Unitarian congregation in the United States
- 1873 saw the appointment of Martha Turner as the first woman pastor of an Australian church
- 1880 the first Methodist woman minister was appointed in the United States

The year 1948 marked the publication of C. S. Lewis’s anti-women piece, *Priestesses in the Church* (Lewis, 1948), it was not a moment in which women with vocations to the priesthood, or their supporters felt any great encouragement (Shaw, 2012, p.20). 1960 saw the first debate on the ordination of women in the Australian Church, Hillard writes
in *The Organised Opposition*, of how many viewed the idea as fanciful, “a subject for jokes about priestesses teetering into the sanctuary on high heels” (Hillard, 2012, p.95). Following the 1968 Lambeth Conference, which urged all Anglican churches to study the question of ordaining women, the Melbourne diocesan journal *See* published a flippant sub-editorial on ‘Priestesses?’ “Somehow, priestesses and witches are equally heathen to us...Come on ladies, try and convince us. But no broomstick or rolling pins please” (as cited in Hillard, 2012, p.95).

Linsay (2012) notes 1973 set forth the Australian, General Synod Doctrine Commission, who reported unanimously that there are “no theological objections to the ordination of women as deacons”, yet it was not until 1985 that “the General Synod passed a Canon allowing it” (p.2). 1986 saw the ordination of women in Melbourne, Perth, Tasmania, Gippsland, and North Queensland with other dioceses following gradually, adding Sydney in 1989 (p.2). Linsay notes there are only forty two women licensed as deacons in the Sydney Diocese in 2011, and by 2012, the *Australian Anglican Directory* reports: “twenty two of the twenty three dioceses have women clergy (the Diocese of the Murray with neither deacons or priests being the exception) and twenty dioceses have women priests (although the Diocese of Sydney does not recognise the two women ordained as priests elsewhere but resident within its boundaries)” (as cited in Linsay, 2012, p.3).

In the *Backlash: the New Threat to Ordained Women*, Porter (2012) contends the threat regarding the topic of women’s ordination within the Synod came from Peter Jensen, and his neo-Calvinist Protestantism (pp.375-376). The focus of new Calvinism is based on male headship, or leadership, which is principally derived from a particular interpretation of two Biblical verses: 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 (p.386). This doctrine was first promoted in the United States by aggressive forms of Protestantism, and taken up by the Melbourne Anglican Diocese as “complimentarianism” (p.386). One of the main promoters was the American Pastor Mark Driscoll, as he is on record as deploiring the “chickification of the church through the dominance of women...and his online sermons headed ‘Get the Men’ gives flavour to his teachings” (p.386). Porter points disturbingly to a Melbourne Anglican congregation promoting a similar message on its website, “City on the Hill” a church that meets in a Melbourne city cinema, declaring: “We are in a war: A war for truth, a war for souls, a war for
men. We need men to step up and step out in leading the church forward in building disciples. Men follow men. For this reason, we want to cultivate a culture where men band together and strengthen each other in their pursuit of Jesus. We need a band of brothers” (p.387).

The out-workings of this theology are also described at length on the website of the Sydney organisation, “Equal but Different”, established in 1992, for the sole purpose of opposing the ordination of women priests: “Women are called to voluntary, intelligent, willing submission within marriage...[while]...appointed men assume responsibility for authoritative teaching and pastoral oversight” (Porter, 2012, p.379).

Research from Eisler (1988) reveals there is a connection between male dominance, and this dark side of androcentric Christianity, that gives men a sense of entitlement, which in turn can lead to male violence and the controlling, subjugation of women (Rossi, 1993). Rossi (1993) notes within the marriage vows a woman must submit to her husband’s abuse: Biblical text are cited as an exemplum of woman’s innate inferiority to man; she is bullied into feeling that she is the cause of the abuse, sharing in the guilt that accrues to all women from the verses of Genesis. The root of the abuse of women stems from the interpretation of Genesis, thus demeaning half the human race (Rossi, 1993). In this respect, there is a link between male violence and institutionalised violence, leading to the suppression of women, and in this context her liberty (Morny, 1990). In hindsight, the interpretation of Biblical scripture has not served women either physically or emotionally well in their daily lives (Thistlethwaite, 1989). This was succinctly pointed out in chapter 4 which detailed the arguments of Baird, and Gleeson, outlining the fact that women are told to submit to domestic violence, perpetrated by their husbands all in the name of God.

There were two main arguments against the ordination of women: the first was by what authority as the Church saw God as its giver and source, also that Christ chose men to be his apostles (Hillard, 2012, p.97). Both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church embrace the majority of the world’s Christians, and the notion for the ordination of women did not reflect the attitude of ‘the Catholic and Apostolic tradition’ (p.98). Hillard notes, “if the Anglican Church did abandon the tradition of a male priesthood it would cease to be an authentic part of Catholic Christendom; it would have become a sect that had changed its ministry without reference to the wider church” (p.99). Those
who were committed to the doctrine of male leadership “were not impressed by the argument put forward by the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) seeing it as an offshoot of secular feminism, with its call for full equality for women, its opposition to sexism in the church, they insisted, should not adjust its historic teachings to follow the fashionable ‘isms’ of the day and the demands of noisy pressure groups” (p.99). In spite of all the negative objections, history was made in Australia, when in February 2018 Kay Goldsworthy became the first female Anglican Archbishop of Perth (Weber, 2018, p.1), the first woman in this country and across the world to be given this title (Lee, 2018, p.7). Lee notes Kay Goldsworthy “is the true heir of Magdalene as she is portrayed in the earliest Christian writings (p.7).

The Relevance of Goddess Religion

In *Equality or Divinity: A False Dichotomy*, Morny (1990) perceptively notes, “women are keenly aware of the injustice within religious traditions, and institutions, without commensurate possibilities of remediying these injustices” (p.23). On this note, the image of divinity is particularly potent. Proponents of Goddess religion advocate formative and intimate symbols that affirm female ways of being (p. 23). In her article *The Sacred Feminine or Goddess Feminism*, Carol Christ, theologian and Goddess feminist writes in recent years the term ‘sacred feminine’ has become interchangeable with (for some) and preferable to (for others) ‘Goddess’ and ‘Goddess feminism’. The terms Goddess and Goddess feminism, raises the ire of some people, is Goddess replacing God, and if so why (Christ, 2020, p.1). Goddess feminism arose in clear opposition to patriarchy and patriarchal religions. Christ reiterates Goddess feminism was born of an explicit critique of societies organised around male domination, violence, war, and of the male God or Gods of patriarchal religions as justifying domination, violence, and war. In this context the ‘sacred masculine’ was not understood to be a neutral or positive concept. To the contrary, the male Gods of patriarchy were understood to be at the centre of symbol systems that justify domination (p.2). Women have become all too aware of the images that society has used and continues to use to control women. Gustovo Gutierrez states, “human history has been written by a white hand, from the dominating social class” (Gutierrez as cited in
Fiorenza 1989, p.34). Feminist theologians are attempting to reconstruct early Christian history as women’s history in order to restore early Christian history as history about both women and men. There is a need to reconceptualise early Christian theology which has been codified by men, scholarship and hermeneutics are patriarchal, sacred texts are representative and products of an androcentric patriarchal culture and history (Fiorenza, 1989, p.31). Ruether (1981) notes that feminist studies in religion have sought to discover an alternative history and tradition outside of Judaism and Christianity, one that supports the inclusion of personhood and the humanity of women (p.391). Some of these feminists, contends Ruether, are academically trained religious scholars who teach in religious studies or “others are more self-trained writers that relate to the popular feminist spirituality movement, such as Starhawk (The Spiral Dance, 1999) and Budapest (The Holy Book of Women’s Mysteries, 1979) (p.391). Such feminists draw from sources of anthropology, together with historical scholarship on matriarchal societies, also ancient religions, which centre on the worship of a Mother Goddess rather than the patriarchal male God of Semitic religions.

A significant underlining problem for feminist theologians is the controversy over women’s ordination. Torjesen (1995) contends “in the last half of the twentieth century has occasioned interesting questions having to do with women’s roles, female character, sexuality and the gender of God” (p.2). In Ruether’s analysis of Mary Daly’s, Beyond God the Father: Towards a philosophy of Women’s liberation, the male god must be rejected because: “‘He’ is not the true God, but an idol. The true god is ‘not out there’ nor even the God ‘who is not yet’ so dear to the theologians of hope. The true God is the power of Be-ing which can be found loving ‘I-thou’ relations between persons” (Ruether, 1974a, p.72).

Male morality constructed the most unholy trinity of rape, genocide and war (Ruether, 1974a, p.72). On this subject Ruether contends, “Nature must be liberated from its bondage to the phallic morality of rape and death” (p.73). In Feminist Philosophy of Religion, Anderson (as cited in in Frankenberry, 2018) challenges the subject of the privileged model of God as a disembodied person, “yearning is the vital reality of human life which gives rise to religious belief...yearning for truth whether epistemological, ethical (justice), or aesthetic (love or beauty), need to supplement standard approaches to philosophy of religion” (pp.15-16). Feminist theologians,
Plaskow and Christ (1989) note in *Weaving the Vision: Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, that “women have become all too aware of the images that society has used and continues to use to control women” (p.269). Women have not advocated divinisation of female humanity, but utilise formative and intimate symbols that affirm female ways of being (Morny, 1990, p.22). Plaskow and Christ (1989) “envision a world of connection, and relationship, (not dualism, division or hierarchy), a world in which pluralism and diversity (not monolithic unity) are celebrated as contributing to the richness of the whole” (p.269).

Furthermore, Mary Daly, and Lucy Irigary, sought to clarify feminine symbols to concepts and ontology in projecting a female as divine, while arguing that “the Father God is an idealised projection of masculine identity and that the process of women’s becoming divine is imperative” (as cited in Frankenberry, 2018, p.11). For this they advocate “nothing less than the overturning of the symbolic order, and of language itself” (p.11). Both Daly, and Irigary have each in their own way helped forge a feminist consensus that “spirituality is to be exulted above doctrine, and that patriarchal conceptions of God as any kind of objective reality must be deconstructed so that female subjectivity might become more expansive and free” (p.11). When referencing the Church, it forgets that women too, “were created in God’s image”, limiting not only women, but also God (Hollyday, 1994, p.4).

Hollyday (1994) explains how the feminine part of the divine creative force was banned centuries ago in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, in reaction to the ‘fertility cults with pagan goddesses’ which intruded on the early Israelites from surrounding cultures (p.4). The fact that so-called ‘heathens’ worshipped the female in divinity, and blame of the female as tempter, was central to the Israelites turning away from their god, the consensus therefore being “the God of Israel became the male God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (p.4). In *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, Guiley (1989) argues that neo-Paganism, and Goddess worship is inspired by ancient knowledge, focusing attention on the inter-connection of humanity and Nature, while taking a positive valuing of the body (p.363). It follows that the practitioners of neo-Paganism combine the spirituality of both masculine and feminine principles, while acknowledging the sanctity of nature and all life (Guiley, 1989, p.363; Plaskow & Christ, 1989, pp.95-96). The concept of the *Wiccan Rede* renders Guiley (1989), is “harm none that is the way of
the lore”. There is a tenet that if the Rede is broken, “a karmic boomerang effect” will occur, bringing negativity or evil upon the practitioner (p.364). Guiley concurs there is still a struggle for Witches or neo-Pagans to be accepted within mainstream society as they are looked upon with negativity (p.364).

Feminist theologians, and feminist philosophies are drawing upon the old ideas and traditions in order create new epistemologies while re-discovering the Feminine Divine. Marianne Ferguson, Monica Sjoo, Merlin Stone, Carol Christ, draw on aspects of the Goddess as a positive affirmation of the female body and the life cycle expressed in it. However, such assertions call attention to the very elements of “body identity that cause the broken-bodied women suffering” (Wagner & Scott, 2015, p.201). For cyber-feminists the internet is a site for hybridity, fluidity, and virtual performance of identity, creating discursive spaces that challenge preconceived binaries of gender (p.201). Rachel Wagner and Sarah Scott (2015), discuss how feminist visions of transcending the limited views of women to become a goddess, or fertile earth creator, is unhelpful for those women who have “broken bodies” and are suffering because of their “lack of creative and reproductive power” (p.202). Wagner and Scott explore alternative feminist images of creativity which might be more helpful to women who are hurting due to “bodily limitations”, while arguing new rituals, and new forms of “mythic liberation”, are required (p.202). The authors ask “what other analogies exist for self affirmation”? They give four sets of analogs drawn from existing traditions: audacity, crone-dom hybridity, and eroticism (p.202). Wagner and Scott chronicle Princess Diana as an exemplum for the audacious icon in view of her extensive love, compassion and recognition of the common people, alongside of those who have been rejected by mainstream patriarchal society (p.202). Power is in the name Diana which is associated with the light and dark archetype of the Goddess/witch (p.202) (also outlined in the previous chapter). Princess Diana fought for social change: she was protector of the poor, the sick, and those inflicted with Aids, as well as war-torn countries to be free of landmines. Diana was cruelly hounded by the paparazzi until they finally brought about her destruction. Wagner and Scott proffer Diana is a goddess figure that even the broken-bodied woman could emulate thus refusing not to defined by others (pp.202-203).
The Goddess tradition honours the ‘triple goddess’ described as maiden, mother and crone. The crone, posit Wagner and Scott (2015) is the hag who is close to her own death (p.203). Archetypically the crone is representative of the wise women, or the healing hag who is deeply in touch with nature. A significant aspect allied with the crone is her source of power, she is bold, brazen, filled with secret knowledge, a woman who laughs a lot and is not bound by social tradition. The crone’s self confidence can be embraced by any woman of any age, including the broken-bodied (p.203). In this sense, the broken-bodied woman is invited to reject the ‘fracturing’ of patriarchal labels associated with her body and to enact belonging with a lived community focused on health and nurture (p.203). Hybridity focuses on modes of gender as performance, be it lesbians, cyborgianism and the monstrous. All these modes of hybridity consider ways that identity can inhabit those in between spaces manifesting itself in particularised performances of fluidity (pp.205-206). Gender is one of the ways in which order can be imposed, identity is sometimes erased by the requirement of binary gender performance whether it be women who are transsexual, women who do not want children, those who refrain from sex, women without ovaries, or have had hysterectomies – “all have the right to define themselves as they see fit” (p.206). When we think of eroticism, Wagner and Scott note, we think of heterosexual passion. However, Starhawk (as cited in Wagner & Scott, 2015) reasons to presume the erotic to only heterosexuals cuts off other forms of desire to the position of deviant and makes invisible the realities of gay men, lesbians and bisexual people (p.208). This line of reasoning also cuts us off from the energetic dance and attraction we may share with nature. Starhawk’s model of the erotic makes room for all broken-bodied women to celebrate their own bodies with the innate energies of life (p.208). Wagner and Scott’s (2015) view of Cyber-feminist’s idealism, is subject to a post-dualistic world, and also the celebration of the physical female body in goddess religion, “should...allow embodied difference as a longstanding ideal of feminist proclamation” (p.209). Braidotti (as cited in Wagner & Scott, 2015) alludes to this in conjunction with Gilles Deleuze and Lucy Irigaray by stating: “we need to think the deep, dense materiality of bodies-in-time, so as to disengage them from the liberal bourgeois definition of the self that is en-fleshed, sustainable, and limited, while having firmly departed from any reference to the natural order” (p.209).

This means, of course, that for Cyber-feminism to embrace the “broken-body”, it must also be able to “unplug”, and for Goddess religions to embrace the “non-birthing
broken-bodied women, it must bring the Goddess back to Earth, but this time without a womb” (Braidotti as cited in Wagner & Scott, 2015, pp.209-210). While Goddess spirituality embraces some women there is also an urgent need for an alternative transcendent symbol in the restoration of the feminine within divinity and the mythic narrative.

**Shifting the Mythic Narrative**

The Adam and Eve myth is a deeply engrained element within Western metaphysics, and within our cultural society. Rooke argues that the Genesis myth “demands a feminist interpretation” as the narrative demonstrates women’s inferiority and legitimises their subordination while re-enforcing a patriarchal world-view that still pervades most of Western culture today (Rooke, 2007, p.161). In his days as a cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger (2004) wrote a *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaborations of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* addressing, “certain currents of thought which are often at variance with the authentic advancement of women” (p.1). Cardinal Ratzinger’s letter discusses the issue of women’s subordination in regard to men, while intentionally, or unintentionally, laying blame squarely on the shoulders of women:

*in order to be themselves, [women] must make themselves the adversaries of men. Faced with the abuse of power, the answer for women is to seek power. This process leads to opposition between men and women, in which the identity and role of one are emphasised to the disadvantage of the other, leading to the harmful confusion regarding the human person, which has its not immediate and lethal effects in the structure of the family* (p.1).

Leonard (1995) that no papal teaching, or Vatican document, “concedes at any stage that the church has been instrumental in maintaining a history of discrimination against women”. In fact, the Church has a proud tradition in its “relation to women” (p.108). Despite this denial, Rossi (1993) posits that: “The exclusion of women from decision making in regard to their own lives continues in the Church to this day and punctuates the failure of the hierarchy to acknowledge the full humanity and personhood of
women, often recognised in society, but not in the Catholic Church in this last decade of the twentieth century” (p.2).

Mary Daly’s work entitled Beyond God the Father (1973) was written in the 70s, during the second wave of women’s liberation: one could call her a radical feminist. However, she provided some remarkable insights into the phenomena of patriarchy. Like many feminists, (details of which are scattered throughout this thesis), Daly saw women’s role as “scapegoats” being fostered by Christianity, especially in the connection with the “myth of feminine evil” (p.76). It is significant that “not only the negative qualities of victim” which have been projected upon women, but also the propensity of being temptresses; the “evil and matter-bound ‘nature’ of the female”, albeit the alleged shallowness of mind, weakness of will, and hyper-emotionality (p.76) all notions that were allied with the myth of Eve and Pandora, and as such accord with the patriarchal world.

In Eve and Pandora Contrasted Phipps (1988) notes, that the Hellenisation of Asia under Alexander the Great, “impacted upon Jewish thought when Palestine came under Hellenic influence” (p.39). Philo (as cited in Phipps, 1988), Jewish scholar and philosopher is mentioned in the Critique of Sages, outlining his opinion on the myth of Pandora and women (p.40). Like many of his fellow narrators of sacred text, The Bible; Pseud-epigrapha; The Talmud, and Rabbinical Judaism, Philo looked upon women as no more “bitter than death”, and in this context supporting and accepting the negative texts demeaning Eve (p.40). On the subject of women, there are no instances within Biblical literature where Jesus warns his disciples on “the wiles of women” (p.41). Phipps (1988) notes, Jesus “would have probably given priority to the ideal partnership expressed earlier in the Genesis creation story” (p.41). The text is dependent upon the interpretation of the reader, also cultural conditioning, as well as life experiences, and to those who have a belief that women are inferior (Miles, 1991, p.161). In this sense, Phipps (1988) argues that Tertullian is the first leader in Latin Orthodoxy to compare the first woman Eve, with the Greek myth of Pandora (p.42). His infamous denunciation of women displays his mixture of the two myths: “Do you know each of you is an Eve? You are the one who opened the Devil’s door; you unsealed the forbidden tree...How easily you destroyed man, the image of God. Because of the death which you brought upon us, even the son of God had to die” (p.42).
Opening the Devil’s door and unsealing the forbidden tree, are images of Pandora, in her raising the lid of the jar which contained all earth’s evils (Phipps, 1988, p.42). Literature abounds with misogynist tropes that have reinforced this image of woman. If we consider Justin Martyr, John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine, and John Milton in his tome Paradise Lost, together “their misogyny knows no bounds” argues Phipps (Phipps, 1988, pp.42-43). Such examples as the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, Heinreich Kramer and Joseph Springer’s Malleus Maleficarum, all of these authors accept unequivocally Eve’s seduction of Adam (p.45). Mary Daly (1973) contends that over the millennia Eve has been continually viewed as the universal woman, as the incarnation of evil (p.46). She even entitled a chapter in one of her books “Exorcising Evil from Eve”.

There are other aspects to consider as the myth accords so much with the patriarchal world, by way of which it has been shaped and supported by Christianity over the centuries (Rooke, 2007, p.161), Rooke contends, “the world view and the Genesis narrative, are viewed as re-enforcing each other, and in this sense, the narrative is much a part of the mythology of present day society as it ever was in ancient Israel” (p.161). Exonerating one gender in favour of another is pernicious at best, Phipps (1988) points to the fact that “scapegoating has gone on for far too long, corrective exegesis in our time by feminists, and scholars, will bring an end to this denigration” (p.48). Part of the trouble, contends Phipps, is the fact that male prejudice towards women is “difficult to eradicate”, she then explains how “a fresh look at the myth of Eve, provides no encouragement for keeping it alive” (p.48). Meanwhile, Rooke (2007) renders the myth as “innate, [and] there is nothing that can be done about it” (p.162). As previously contended in earlier chapters the myth surrounding Eve and women lies within the realm of humanities collective memory, and in this sense is innate and passing through all generations to be remembered and reinterpreted.

A further aspect should be noted in consideration of Qualls-Corbett’s research (1988) which establishes an absence of the Divine Feminine within patriarchy (p.144). Contemporary Western culture has been based for two millenniums on Christian mythology, albeit influencing our attitudes towards the Feminine, both directly and indirectly: in patriarchy the feminine is split off (p.144). The dominant images in the Western world are those of “power, wealth and technical knowledge”, these are the
“gods” we currently honor (p.144). In Qualls-Corbett’s view “we no longer worship the
goddess of love; consequently we have no container for sexual ecstasy, the numinous
state where the inner core of the individual is awakened and revealed to the self and
other” (p.144). The balance of both social and psychic structures, are skewered towards
the dominating paradigm. The end result is a lack of balance and harmony either within
oneself or in the external world (p.16). A further consideration is a “total disregard of
the symbolic and archetypal image [of the Feminine] so related to passionate love, a
splitting off of values, one-sidedness occurs in the psyche” (p.16). At a deeper level
suggests Qualls-Corbett, is the fact “we are sadly crippled in our search for wholeness
and health” (p.16). From this it follows that women’s liberation can only come from the
mature struggle for love, justice, and peace. The story of the Fall, Daly (1973) suggests:

is in that dreaded event when women reach for knowledge and finding it, share it
with men, so that together we can leave the delusory paradise of false consciousness
and alienation. In ripping the image of the Fall from its old context we are also
trans-valuating it. That is, its meaning is divested of its negativity and becomes
positive and healing (p.67).

Callimachi (2018) makes a noteworthy argument in accessing: “It’s not a women’s
question: it’s a humanity question, and men have to take responsibility to end it” (p.24).

As feminist theory sets out to endorse new modes of thought we need to inspire a new
mythology for women, one which empowers women through the sacred. A new image
of God is required which reflects both the feminine, and masculine images of the divine,
rather than the current separatist epistemology which diminishes and alienates women
while supporting patriarchy.

**Conclusion**

In summing up, this chapter is representative of a small window into the ordination of
women as the enormous amount of documentation lies outside of the scope of this
chapter. Within the Christian mystery only two people are present, Jesus and Mary
Magdalene, without the feminine presence there simply would not have been a new
religion, given the fact that women were responsible for spreading the Christian word
through evangelical ministry. And yet, there is a consistent denial by the Catholic Church that women were never ordained, or that ordination for women is even probable. Within the Celtic church women were highly respected, and influential as advisors to priests and royalty, as well as heading up monasteries spreading the word of God. There is, however, extensive historical and Biblical evidence advanced by theologians and historians in support of women’s ordination, but many Church Fathers have simply closed their eyes to the fact, pointing out it is a ‘women’s issue’. As the Church consolidated power women were banned from the ministry, hereof having to renounce their sexuality in order to gain value and approval by ‘becoming male’. The early Church was frightened by the traditions of pagan fertility cults seeing celibacy as protection from such cults, but as previously argued Catholic clerics have flaunted their vows of celibacy and coerced morality. It has been argued that the Catholic Church remains the last monarchy on earth with all the trappings of wealth and royalty, while obsessing over sin, and sexuality, but to date, the Church has become by its very nature, what it fought so hard against, through sexual scandal and the excesses of entitlement by the clergy (Jackowski, 2004; Yallup, 2010; Parenti, 2010; Litonjua, 2018; Nuzzi, 2015).

For centuries the creation story of Genesis, and the myth surrounding Eve, has been used as a tool for denying women access to ordination citing the female body as inappropriate because it does not resemble the body of Christ. A woman’s nature or essence is considered unsuitable since she is different, only male nature is considered to be divine, her otherness, legitimises her subordination, all of which is affirmed and continually to be reaffirmed by male hierarchy. As argued, the Adam and Eve myth remains deeply embedded in Western culture and metaphysics. Eve is envisaged as the archetypal universal woman, an assumption which has been carried down through the ages. In the eyes of the Church Fathers, women are evil because they are not made in the “image of God” and are second in creation. With the fall from grace came an awareness of sexual differences, and with the recognition of that power came upheaval, and shame. The myth accords with a patriarchal mindset and as such worldview and myth reinforce each other. But perhaps, nothing is more shameful than the ironclad subjugation of women that has followed. There is an urgent need for a paradigm shift so that the Western masculine consciousness may come to terms with the Feminine. Religion in an educational sense has been used consistently as a weapon of power and
injustice in the subjugation of women and Nature. The myth surrounding Eve and
womanhood is innate, becoming part of the collective unconscious and therefore
difficult to eradicate. There is, however, a dire need for a new myth, in respect to
Christian mythology which reinforces attitudes towards women, both directly and
indirectly. It is therefore necessary to overturn the existing symbolic order whereby
spirituality and the Feminine coincide with doctrine. The feminine part of the divine
was cut off centuries ago by Judaeo/Christian tradition, while this may be true, a
desperate need remains in the restoration and consolidation of the Divine Feminine to
her rightful place alongside of the masculine part of God. The world is skewed and
out of balance because the Goddess of Love and Sexuality is no longer worshipped or
acknowledged. In hindsight, the dominant epistemology has not served women well
either physically or emotionally in their daily lives, nor are religious traditions, and
institutions readily about to remedy these injustices.
Conclusion

The presumption of this thesis has been to explore, and argue, that the Godhead within Western civilisation contains no Feminine face of the Divine. The social ramifications that underpin this loss is that women’s stories have been told through a male voice; as Ruether astutely notes, “standards of normative humanity is full of male ideological bias that defines women as secondary inferior members of the human species” (Ruether, 1981, p.389). Religion as a social and ideological system has the capacity and the tendency to “create a reality in which violence is acceptable, necessary and even desirable” (Eller, 2010, p.79). This ideology has been confirmed in the unmitigated violence that has been pitted against women from the earliest times through to present day with the number of women who have suffered all forms of cruelty through rape and domestic violence. Biblical text is cited as an exemplum of woman’s innate inferiority to man, she is made to feel she is the cause of the abuse. Women share in the guilt that accrues to all women from the verses of Genesis which in essence, demeans half of the human race. Rossi (1993) contends religion is the root of the abuse of women (p.1).

Numerous examples of this overt theological bias are cited throughout this thesis. This work contains not the traditional rendering of the creation mythology found in the Biblical text of Genesis, but a reinterpretation of the story. The aim of the thesis has been to make explicit, the androcentric bias of dominant Biblical exegesis as argued in the six chapters of this work.

This thesis has provided an overview of the vast literature which makes clear that God is masculine. The purpose of this work is to demonstrate the pressing need for a reinterpretation of the Genesis creation story as the thesis has demonstrated our world is out of balance due to the lack of the Divine Feminine. I have argued that the Feminine Principle is a philosophy based on wholeness, love, justice and personhood, rather than the rational, dualistic metaphysics that permeates our culture today. Frankenberry (2018) contends “not one of the religions of the world has been totally affirming of woman’s personhood” (p.3). The Feminine Principle is an energy that underpins all of life, lacking recognition of this we have exiled ourselves from the earth and Nature. Recognition of the Feminine Principle by theologians would mean the reconceptualisation of the entire natural world and Nature as Mother. In this sense, the
Feminine Principle is the untapped subtle potential that lies at the very core of our being, and it must be realised to restore the balance and harmony between intuition and intellect, feelings and facts, alongside of reason and realism. It is therefore fundamental to our spiritual, emotional, and psychological wellbeing that the Feminine face of God be restored to the Godhead. The loss of the Divine Feminine from consciousness is a wound which we all carry. Without her dimension of love and justice we exile ourselves from the earth, from physicality and from each other. In our Western culture there is no goddess myth, and therefore no collective image of the Feminine as Soul, or as Divine. Within the human mind the first example of the sacred is conceived in the archetypal Feminine as God, as Mother (Neumann, 1955; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Matthews, 1992; Markale, 1999; O’Murchu, 2013). That being said, while history and archaeology show that the Goddess was once worshiped, there is no longer an experience of the archetypal Feminine image as a sacred entity that once could be drawn upon.

Archetype is a term formulated by Carl Jung acting as primordial images within the structural elements of the collective unconscious which are inherited. Myth is the foundation for the study of archetypes acting as a vehicle for the unconscious. The evolution of consciousness is a continuing process, stretching over thousands of years, becoming an integrated part of the structure of modern consciousness (Jung, 1975, p.85). Science has been critical in providing the necessary proof of Jung’s theory as the human race holds the collective memories of our ancestors within the double helix of our own DNA (Stevens, 1982, pp.72-73). If we consider the ancient origins of human consciousness the Feminine has been explored in many cultures from prehistory to our present time. The initial development of religious patterns arose with the worship of the Feminine, as a natural phenomenon, as many creation myths from societies across the world had as their original creator the Great Earth Mother, or Goddess of Beginnings (Neumann, 1955; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Matthews 1992; Markale, 1999; Christ, 2020). With the discovery of new sciences comes the realisation that all of life is sacred and whole. Quantum physics identifies the universe as a unity expressed in patterns of relationship (O’Murchu, 2013). In essence, the Great Mother aligns with new physics, as the world is experienced as an interconnected part of the whole, given all of life is experienced as part of a sacred, cosmic order immanence is within everything (O’Murchu, 2013). Time is spun from her eternal womb out of which the ‘cosmic web’ of all life is spun (Capra, 1996). The myth of the Goddess moves through several stages:
from the Palaeolithic Age, moving through to the Neolithic, and Bronze Age culminating in our present time. If we review the historical stages of the demise of the goddess myth, we can gain some perspective of where we stand today (Neumann, 1955; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Markale, 1999).

The thesis asserts at the beginning of human understanding, the symbol of the archetypal Feminine arose out of the Mother Goddess who alone gives birth out of her eternal womb, all of her progeny are part of her divine essence. Everything is living, animated with soul as part of her divine substance, and therefore sacred. Thereafter, the Mother Goddess gives birth to her son who becomes her lover, and consort to give birth to the world (Baring & Cashford, 1991). Hereafter the relationship changes from one of partnership to the overthrow of the Mother by her son, who develops into the all powerful, patriarchal, warrior Sky God thus becoming the archetypal Father God, who creates the world alone, without any reference to the Mother Goddess. This Bronze Age myth becomes the Iron Age myth of the Hebrew Yahweh-Elohim, whereby the creator god is transcendent to creation, creating by the power of the Word alone (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Laura & Chalender, 2012). In this context the male god becomes the source of all creation taking over the fertile female functions of the Great Mother’s creative womb. Motivated by violence, and a lust for power, this patriarchal takeover of the new world order is mirrored by the action of the gods. Creation takes place through the act of killing as the male gods seek to dominate, and subjugate, all the functions of the female. The gods now make the heavens and the earth: the Great Mother was heaven and earth.

A prime example for this lust for power occurs within the Genesis creation story whereby creation occurs through the spoken word, or Logos, giving rise to reason, and lacking any mythical thought (Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Laura & Chalender, 2012). On this point, Genesis becomes a psychological platform for the beginning of patriarchy, written from a misogynistic viewpoint albeit to keep women in their place, and not as divine revelation. Language is subsumed into an ontology of power, religious institutions become patriarchal and patrilineal, as priests turn into the gatekeepers of knowledge, creating a major shift downwards in the development and treatment of nature and women (Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Laura & Chalender, 2012). The eleventh century BCE saw the rise of the priestly cults, women were excluded from public and
religious activities, as strict regulations were introduced governing female sexuality. The writing of Genesis occurred around this same time period, with the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole undergoes a dramatic change due to the impact of the Indo-European invaders. The first wave occurred around 4,300 – 4,200BCE; the second wave approximately 3,400-3,200BCE; and the final and most devastating onslaught 3,000 – 2,800BCE; while the marauding hordes were from a heroic warrior society who worshiped the Sky God of Thunder and Lightning, possessing a preoccupation with death, rather than the life-giving forces of the Goddess (Eisler, 1988, p.44; Gimbutas, 1989; Baring & Cashford, 1991; DeMeo, 2006, 2013; Taylor, 2010; Elster, 2015). The Hebrew tradition has as its primacy a male God expressed in masculine terms with epithets of lord and master, while lacking any form of tolerance to any alternative theological perspective (Kirk, 1970, p.101). Conversely, polytheism leaves room for the validity of other peoples’ gods: Christians and Muslims, like Jews, trace their god back to the god that, according to the Bible, revealed himself to Abraham in the second millennium BCE. Wright (2010) contends “these three Abrahamic religions...don’t always see each other worshipping the same god...Is violence part of the character of the Abrahamic god? Is there something about this god or something about monotheism generically that is conducive to slaughter through the ages?” (p.101).

The theology of Genesis is a palimpsest of myths which is not life-affirming, promoting an ideology based upon monotheism, devoid of any form of sexuality, fertility rites, or any aspect of the Feminine. As a powerful symbol, the image of the Great Goddess, Mother of all living, must be overturned and subdued at all costs. Hereafter the birth of humanity is no longer an act of divine union, but of a single affair attributed to God who orders from without, he is beyond creation. Western civilisation inherited the religion of Abraham bringing to bear fundamental implications in how we create and view the world. Patriarchal Theism is one example of the connections that have historically been forged between women and nature in order to justify their domination, subjugation and exploitation (Laura & Chalender, 2012). Women and nature have an aged old affiliation being perceived as ‘Other’. In spite of this notion the female is still needed in creation: man realizes he cannot give birth alone. The problem is solved in the Genesis creation myth setting up an epistemology of power when Yahweh created Adam, and Eve, putting Eve and woman firmly in her place after two males. The birth of Eve can be construed as an inversion of natural human relations as mother to child (Lerner, 1986a,
Man, defines himself the Mother, of the Woman, through divine creativity by bringing forth life from the male, as the human mother brings forth life from her body, thereby denying woman her role in procreation. Masculine theology is built on the negation of the Mother, the god/man does not need nature turning to technology to recreate nature, and in doing so murders the living universe, and as such the earth and women become chattels for exploitation. God/man imitates creation by destroying, thus setting up a battle of principalities, in doing so the notion of love is distorted in the process, destroyed through the epistemology of power (Laura & Buchanan, 2012; Laura & Chalender, 2012).

Today’s distinction between spirit and nature, mind and matter or soul and body, have no place, for humanity and nature share the same identity and we can never speak of nature without referring to ourselves. By limiting our view of history to the written word scholars have served patriarchal interests well. In general, scholars have failed to realize that by stripping the Goddess of her key powers, and transferring them to a male deity, they have stopped short in discovering her key role, that is, the process of death and rebirth. Male eschatology combines womb negation, with womb envy life is a cycle, and not eternal. In this sense there is never enough, having a morbid fear of death, the masculine principle searches for immortality and life everlasting. Western culture has difficulty in coming to terms with death as being an inevitable part of life. We need to recognize that birth, life and death are a cyclical part of nature not just a linear progression. Conversely, the Terrible Mother, or the Devouring Female, is representative of the dark side of femininity as exemplified in radical feminism, overbearing, possessive wives or extremely assertive women who have lost their caring, guiding, civilizing role in human relationships (de Motte, 2003, p.77).

Evidence suggests that Gnostic Christianity venerated the Feminine Principle, seeing Eve and the Serpent in a different light to Orthodox Christianity (Pagels, 2006). In this sense, the Old Testament associated Eve and the Serpent with death however, the Great Serpent is associated with wisdom, and healing, acting as avatar to the Great Goddess. The shedding of the skin is associated with transformation, immortality, regeneration and rebirth (Eisler, 1988). For two thousand years, from 1500BCE to the 4th century CE, the power of prophecy came from Delphi and its last recorded response was given in 393CE with the imposition of Christianity (Young, 1994). While the origins of the
Delphic oracle are shrouded in history the gender conflict between Apollo’s take-over of the Cumae Sybil is told in the Homeric hymn to Pythian Apollo. Like the Great Serpent of the Sea Tiamat and Levithian, the Pytho monster had to be murdered and replaced by the new world order, and yet the symbols of the Goddess tradition were to remain. For five hundred years the Pytho Sybils were renowned for their prophecy, and wisdom, until their demise at the hands of the Greek god Apollo (Young, 1994). Hereof, the Sibyls, or Pythia, had to be replaced by human female figures whose wise portents, strangely enough, were interpreted by Pythian male priests.

Every culture has its own words for talking about what visionaries and seers do. Other mythologies provide alternates to the usurping of female seers. Within the Celtic tradition the Irish myths provide an example in the use of wisdom and prophecy. Celtic mythology gives rise to the relationship between the mythical and physical places, albeit the identity of the Banshee is a supernatural, anthropomorphic, woman, solitary in character and guardian angel to those persons who are about to die (Lysaght, 1986, p.47). She is the Irish death-messenger who warns of imminent death by wailing close to the house of the departing soul. The death-messenger tradition is orientated towards the interest of the whole community, while focusing on family centred aspects fore-filling important needs of those who share in her belief. In this respect the Irish clergy are not hostile to folk-beliefs as the banshee, being the psychic fabric of the community, did not draw clerical opposition (Lysaght, 1986).

In contrast, the Bible pre-ordained the position of women by denying women their wisdom, as male eschatology took up wisdom as their sole province. The Feminine Principle in ancient times was associated with Wisdom. Biblical scholars, however, both covet, and steal the innate principles of the Feminine, by changing Wisdom into a Male Spirit which becomes Logos, or the Word of God, later conceived as the figure of Christ (Ruether, 2005, p.131; Long, 1992). Paradoxically, the forgotten Biblical passages within Proverbs state ‘God made the world in Wisdom’ (Pagels, 1979, p.76), could Wisdom be the feminine power in which God’s creation was conceived? However, Wisdom saw another change of ownership in the acquisition of the Holy Ghost as the dove belonged to the Goddess, albeit taking the souls of the dead to the otherworld, or heaven. The goddess as feminine figure of Wisdom is dethroned, and repressed by the patriarchal development of the Judaic-Christian West with its
masculine, monotheistic trend towards abstraction. Wisdom survived only secretly, for most part on heretical and revolutionary bypaths. The archetypal feminine figure of the Great Mother still lives within the Christian pictorial framework of the Madonna’s all-encompassing mantle sheltering needy mankind beneath her outstretched cloak (Neumann, 1955, p.321). However, research on this particular topic is outside the scope of the thesis. When looking at the feminine face of Gnosticism, it is wholly expressed as Sophia, or World-Soul, Goddess, and mediator, of all Wisdom (Matthews, 1992: Long, 1992; Arthur, 1984; ). As transcendent Wisdom known as Sophia, has been one of the few active manifestations of the Divine Feminine within the last two millennia.

The image of Mary Magdalene carries the dynamic transforming aspects of the Feminine, passion, spirituality and joyfulness (Qualls-Corbet, 1988, p.152). The Gospel of Philip reiterates Wisdom as being associated with Mary Magdalene; also in the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, the only gospel to be named after a woman, she is the disciple Jesus most loves, ‘she is the woman who knew and understood the all’ (as cited in Haag, 2016; Daly, 1973). In displaying a visionary power that allows her to take the lead, the Magdalene directed the disciples away from apprehension, and fear, out into the world to preach words of the new gospel. Without the Magdalene, and her financially independent fellow women disciples, who shared and participated alongside her in spreading the word of the new religion, there simply would not have been Christianity (Markale, 1999; Schaberg, 2004; Pagels, 2006; Haag, 2016). In this context, Mary Magdalene challenged the orthodox community who regarded Peter as their leader, and as such we can see two very different attitudes towards sexuality emerging in Orthodox and Gnostic circles. Paradoxically, the story of Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection, bear a striking resemblance to those earlier ‘mystery cults’, which revolved around a divine Mother and her son (Baring & Cashford, 1991). The Goddess tradition provided a base for Judaism, and Christianity, we must acknowledge the appropriation of both her powers and symbols within these similar patriarchal traditions. Contrasted with Orthodoxy, many Gnostic Christians correlate their description of God in both masculine and feminine terms with a complimentary description of human nature. In actuality, every text within the Gnostic canonical collection has been omitted, and branded heretical, by those who call themselves Orthodox Christians. By the time the process of sorting through all of the various writings, concluding around 200CE, virtually all that pertained to the Feminine had
been omitted from Biblical text. Constantine the Great cemented the Canon into law, designing it to fit within the parameters of Orthodoxy, hence divine women were driven from the pages, forcing them to the margins of Christian history (Haag, 2016; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1988). In due course St. Jerome translated the text into the Latin Vulgate, filling the text with misogyny and bias (Wijngaards, 2001). History is always told by the winners as the Bible is the work of chauvinistic men, full of prejudice, and ignorance towards women rather than the work of God. Women’s history must be restored in order to create a balance within humanity, an integration of female experience with male experience within our collective memories back through time. The Bible has been a staggering success on this subject in providing a biased, lopsided argument, nevertheless women are putting a new slant on Biblical text as female theologians, and historians bring a new vision to sacred text (Ruether, 1981, 2005; Holyday, 1994; Torjesen, 1995; Fiorenza & Häring, 1999; Eisler, 1988; Frankenberry, 2018). As earlier intimated, the Garden of Eden myth could be construed as the gaining of Wisdom through a voyage of sexual discovery. Throughout the history of literature Church Fathers and fellow theologians, have treated the sexually active female with disgust and hostility. Female sexuality other than for procreative purposes becomes a sin. The resacrilisation of the body is essential to womanhood in the West. A fear of the Feminine is often fear of the chaotic and ecstatic nature of sexuality itself. Sacred sexuality embodies a spiritual dimension which is alien to what we have inherited by way of the cultural tropes bequested by Christianity.

In this context, the sacred prostitute embodied the spiritual, and erotic, attributes of the Divine Feminine: love, joy, sensuous delight, and also the pain and suffering associated with love. In essence, the flesh and the spirit were united each supporting the other, intercourse with her was a regeneration through the mystery of sex, which paralleled the mystery of ancient religious teachings (Qualls-Corbett, 1988). Scholars referred to this ancient partnership rite as the hieros gamos, this sacred union joined both feminine and masculine principles (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Qualls-Corbet, 1988; Markale, 1999; Stukey, 2001; Matthews, 2002), these same traditions provide important information about our past, if we consider the ritual of the sacred marriage could be the origin of the Grail legend with the Grail being a metaphor for the Goddess (Matthews, 2002a,b). Steeped within Celtic mythology lies the goddess as Sovereignty, and ‘mana’ figure - she is the essence of the spiritual transformative Sophia. The image of the Fisher King,
and the Wasteland nexus, combine to form two symbols in the wake of Grail Mythology. The magic cauldron is a symbol of fertility, which belongs to the elemental character of the Horn of Plenty, that yields food, or cornucopia, and in this sense, linking with the magical food-giving vessels of Irish, and Welsh legends (Matthews, 2002a,b; Hale, 2009). A key feature of Grail mythology is that the Feminine symbol of regeneration, transformation and rebirth, is taken over by patriarchy, yet the Feminine Principle remains in the transformative character of blood, and body, or cauldron. Christian tradition however sublimated the Grail stories for propaganda purposes, almost losing the Grail’s original significance, as the magical kettle of the Goddess, while retaining its food-giving aspects. Sir Thomas Malory, author of the fifteenth-century *Morte d’Arthur*, was the first to use the words ‘Holy Grail’ and said that *Sankreal* was the blessed blood of Christ (Matthews, 2002a,b; Gardner & Osbourne, 2005).

It is interesting to note when a belief cannot be definitively expunged, it is rehabilitated by modifying it in some way so that it conforms to the new ideology (Haag, 2016, p.223). The Book of Leviticus is first to account of Judaism’s struggle against the fecund Mother, the abomination of paganism, and its maternal cults. Hereof, the one God fought against the feminine deities of the ancient world, where female nakedness and the “foundation of her blood” (Leviticus 20: 9-21) is viewed as a pollutant, and man’s souls are unclean. Intriguingly, the Church Fathers transferred the symbolic functions of the Feminine into Christian doctrine, while imitating the natural functions of a woman’s body in the liturgy of the Eucharist. Unknowingly, did the Church Fathers bring the Feminine back into the realm of the sacred, inasmuch as it had been banished through the centuries owing to the birth of monotheism? Nevertheless, the Church Fathers have advanced various excuses on the subject of women’s ordination to the priesthood. Their fundamental excuse stands on the fact that they do not fit into the male image of both God and Christ, and are seen as a major source of pollution. Because of these factors, women are denied access to the sanctuary, no touching of sacred vessels or Eucharistic elements, with no teaching, and no preaching (Raming, 1981, p.3). In this context a woman’s body does not resemble a male body however the Church has forgotten that women are made in the image of God to. Because women are second in creation, due to creational difference, and therefore not fitting within the image of God, misogyny frames women as a defective human being who contains no
soul (Baring & Cashford, 1991, Ruether, 1981). It is her ‘Otherness’, her difference in nature which is inferior to the man: man comes from God; woman comes from man. Social attitudes towards women have filtered down through the centuries to not only Catholic clergy but also Protestant theologians, arguing that women must be the compliant partner to her husband, and subject to his will, a notion which legitimises his abuse (Rossi, 1993). This hostility towards women reached its horrifying climax in the Christian witch-hunts, which saw thousands of women being tortured, and burnt at the stake from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century (Kahl, 1971; Long, 1992; Denike, 2003; Shiritz, 2013).

Clerics have directed all manner of religiously endorsed sexisms against women for committing a variety of sins, while secretly the Church fathers are committing the greatest sin of all: Hubris. These very same men, for centuries disregarded their vows of chastity and celibacy in perpetrating the abominable crimes of rape, sodomy, and abuse on men, women and children (Jackowski, 2004; Yallup, 2010; Litonjua, 2018; Parenti, 2010). It is also possible that the Christian fabric of modern society contains the embedded and false text of women’s innate inferiority to man, the root of woman-hating and woman-battering today (Rossi, 1993; Pease, 2015; Baird & Gleeson, 2017). If we assess this problem at a deeper level, how can the most intimate moments that occur between a man and a woman be so misconstrued, where God has created a world by way of which a man cannot love, respect and trust a woman (Eisler, 1998, p.5). The person through both sex and birth, whom he has been most physically intimate with, how on earth can he place his trust in anyone. Sexual arousal and pleasure is equated with fear, the natural bonding from sexual pleasure has been blocked and distorted (p.5). At a deeper level we no longer worship the goddess of love as we have no container for sexual ecstasy, the numinous state where the inner core of the individual is awakened, and revealed to the self and other (Eisler, 1995). Scholars have found that there is a belief, or something hidden deep within the human psyche that fuels anti-female bias (Spong, 2005, p.74; Rossi, 1993; Eisler, 1995). If it is not just a human phenomenon, it is a least present in the depths of the male psyche, and since prejudice is always a reaction to fear, it must, therefore, be assumed that men’s hostility towards women expresses a primal threat that needs to be addressed. Over the centuries hostility towards women by men has built up becoming real and justified within religious circles (Rossi, 1993; Spong, 2005; Baird & Gleeson, 2017). Spong contends “religion in the West is
dominated by an all powerful male God since religion incorporates and explains human content far more than it creates human content...the place we search for answers to the sins of patriarchy is the terrible text about women is in the scripture of the Bible” (Spong, 2005, p.74; Lee, 2018a; Leader, 2018; Christ, 2020d). We need to challenge men's patriarchal attitudes about women and their sense of male entitlement in relation to women. Men need to break away from their identification with power and control and construct a sense of self that values equality and partnership with women. Woman's empowerment is only a threat to men while they hold onto a sense of self that is created through rigid notions of masculinity, and having power over women. Men have to grow to encourage women’s empowerment (Pease, 2015).

There exists a body of historical truth lying at the centre of ancient mythology, which deals with profound, eternal realities, that being said, not one of the religions of the world has been totally affirming of woman’s personhood (Lerner, 1986a; Rossi, 1993; Laura & Buchanan, 2015). All sacred literatures of the world display an unvarying ambivalence on the subject of women, and it has been a particularly effective way of undergirding and sanctifying gender hierarchy in the West. The exclusion of women from decision making in regard to their own lives continues in the church to this day and punctuates the failure of the hierarchy to acknowledge the full humanity and personhood of women, often recognised in society, but not in the Catholic Church in this last decade of the twentieth century (Rossi, 1993, p.2). It is apparent that there is a fundamental need for change in the recreating, and rewriting of our own personal stories by reconstructing new myths to empower, and heal. Today, the way people think and act can and does, lead to the creation of new stories, and images within their own lives and others. That being said, a new story must be found within the halls of academia, as women’s inferiority has been entrenched in the psyche for far too long. A way of achieving this is through a new foundational curriculum within Religious Education, one which incorporates Public Theology as an alternative program. Public Theology provides the model to address the above mentioned forms of religiously orientated sexism by “making theology and religion relevant to the social order to help spiritualise or re-spiritualise it; in addition to, or in conjunction with, the resources of history and sociology, political theory psychology, economic analysis, etc” (Ali, 1995, p.67). As a topic Public theology has been widely neglected (Pirner, 2019; Lovat, 1989, 2019, Kim, 2019). Re-engaging in Public theology offers a means for reconceptualising the status of
women. Lovat argues that RE programs should address specific theological controversies as well as the more general features of religion, its strengths as well as weaknesses, positive/negative attributes while elaborating on its theological complexities: what is healthy and unhealthy (Lovat, 1989, pp.60-61; 2019). Religious Pedagogy focuses on the links between religion and education (p.39). The arguments ascribed by Pirner, (2019); Kim, (2019); Lovat, (2019), point to a ‘Public Theology’ for religious pedagogy and education. Drawing on the philosophy of Habermas, Pirner refers to Public Theology and the term of “Public Religious Pedagogy can serve as a paradigmatic conceptual frame in which the public responsibility of religious education as well as the intersections between Public Theology and education can be discussed” (Pirner, 2019, p.4-5). Students should have a foundational knowledge of the religions that make up his/her society. It could be argued within Public theology an alternate program be provided, one which includes feminist hermeneutics alongside of traditional theology. The female voice has long been excluded from the scriptures with the emphasis on male dominated imagery, nouns, pronouns and symbols (Christ & Plaskow, 2016; Baring, 2015; Pagels, 2006; Ruether, 1983, 2005; Fiorenza, 1985). Christ & Plaskow *Goddess & God in the World* (2016), note the male voice has dominated Biblical text, male gender has written about women since their views are considered normative (Christ & Plaskow, 2016, pp.131-146). Even though the Bible was written at a different time within a different culture its influence has generated longstanding gender-politics of religiously endorsed sexism.

In *Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief*, Noddings notes religious myths should be taught in the curriculum. We should not teach the Adam and Eve myth to either advance or debunk religion (Noddings, 1993, p.68). If the teaching of certain myths is offensive, then the offense is caused by the ‘misunderstanding’ of the myth and mythic literature. Here is an opportunity to explain that the myths are not untruths or fantasies. Rather, “they are stories designed to explain cultural and natural phenomena in such a way that they can be interpreted over many generations” (Noddings, 1993, p.68). The power of the myths actually grows through a process of demythologization.

Although the sacred text of Judaism, Christianity and Islam all contain statements that urge respect and fairness for women, heterodox and mythical literature emphasise the inferiority of women. This ratification of male dominance runs through every period of
tradition, from the Old to the New Testament, The Talmud, Church Fathers, Canon Law, the Reformation and modern theology. It has been received as normative traditions (Ruether, 1981, p.391). It is imperative that a new mythology replace the old Genesis creation story that lies deeply buried within Western culture, one which affirms both Goddess and God as Divine. A new charter myth which reconstructs, reconceptualises, and re-mythologises the sacred, a new spirituality between the old, and the new mythology of the ancient Mother Goddess and the Judaeo/Christian God. Let us make perfectly clear, changes in myths and realities go hand in hand. Have we sacralised the secular, and secularised the sacred? By reshaping, and redefining our classic myths, from a patriarchal construct into new myths, images, and archetypes, all of which leads to the conceptualisation of new behavioural, and institutional forms of empowerment, thus inspiring us to further changes in our lives. It is not a woman’s problem – it is humanity’s problem and men need to change. The development of a new paradigm for spiritual education is required.

A new religious education paradigm would have the following features:

- The basis of religious symbolism was founded on the Great Mother, as there is a pressing need to restore the Feminine face of the Divine to the Godhead. This would involve -- a reconceptualisation of the old mythology regarding relations between the Mother Goddess and the Father God – a new image of the godhead;
- A new foundational curriculum that combines alternative symbols which are different from that in the traditional theological academic disciplines;
- A search for an alternative tradition that combines feminist spirituality alongside of traditional theology;
- The promotion of a philosophy that argues for wholeness and personhood that is inclusive of both women and men;
- Patriarchal theism has misrepresented the original sacred literature by denying female representation, it is vital to humanity and our planet that the feminine aspects of ourselves be acknowledged and restored;
- Early Christian theology, hermeneutics, and scholarship are patriarchal, feminist scholarship seeks to construct new heuristic models and do justice to the women in early Judaism and Christianity;
Women look for a new form of spirituality that acknowledges the Feminine Principle, a unification of image and reason;

Religion plays a major role in all cultural attitudes towards the body, it is therefore necessary to reconceptualise the symbolic system. Such that humanity is no longer solely represented by the male body (while the female body remains symbolically defective);

Spiritual feminists envision a world of connection and relationship, the connection of humanity and Nature and the presence of the Divine within Nature and a positive valuation of the body;

The only female component within Christianity has been the quasi-divine figure of the Virgin Mary, however, women cannot identify completely with her as she is represented as a forever virgin and mother, all women, including Mary have a crone aspect, an aspect which has been ignored by Christianity. It is power, energy and insight when combined generates the Wisdom of the crone, an aspect which has been subsumed and denied by patriarchy and Church Fathers;

We need to avoid generalizations about, and essentialising men, to distinguish between the men who love and support us, and the male systems of power that has to be resisted, it is not hating men to fight sexism, misogyny and pornography;

Similarly we have to acknowledge that women also have a dark side, that retaliation, sexism and cruelty are part of a woman’s makeup as well; and

When we look at theology from a quantum perspective:

*The expanding horizon of divine belonging is the context which revelation takes place; all creatures are invited to respond, to engage in the co-creative task of being and becoming. All life forms have unique roles in this process, the primary focus of which is creation itself rather than formal religion* (O’Murchu, 2013, p.82).

I have been asked the reason for writing my thesis, the fact is women have no voice: societal expectations point to women not having a voice – this expectation I believe has come down the ages through the collective unconscious. Within my thesis there are critical questions that I put forward in order to advance a hypothesis in support of the relevant questions that have accrued within the thesis. I have always been interested in mythology from my earliest years, and as I travelled through my academic path I
became increasingly interested in women’s issues particularly those concerning the
gender-politics and sexism within religion: religious education has been the dominating
factor which has perpetuated this form of sexism.

In 2006 Dan Brown released his book *The Da Vinci Code*, a work of fiction, but it was
to have a profound effect upon my life, that the God of my childhood could have a
feminine side. Brown’s book pointed to the ‘Gnostic’ gospels and explored the idea that
Jesus could be human, and married to Mary Magdalene. This piqued my interest as
now, an unbeliever, I am still fascinated by all forms of religion. Philippa Townsend’s
critiques the career of Elaine Pagels and the impact of *The Gnostic Gospels*, as well as her later books on the public dialogue concerning early Christianity,
and its relationship to the ancient text found at Nag Hammadi. Townsend writes “she
opened up access to a tradition that many have found spiritually and intellectually
intriguing and she exemplified the culturally enriching role that academics play in
society” (Townsend, 2013, p.7).

In response to an article written by Archbishop Angelo Amato, a top Vatican official
who remonstrated against *The Da Vinci Code*, noting that it was full of historical and
theological errors, In reply, Pagels wrote an article in *San Jose Mercury News*, May 21,
2006, titled “*The truth at the Heart of the Da Vinci Code*” (p.7). Her article noted that
“Brown brought up subjects the Catholic Church would like to avoid (Pagels, 2006,
p.1). He explored ‘the what ifs’: “What if the version of Jesus’ life that all Christians are
taught is not the right one? And perhaps troubling a still-patriarchal Church: What if
Mary Magdalene played a more important role in Jesus’ life than we have been led to
believe, not as his wife perhaps, but as a beloved and valued disciple”? In 1969 the
Catholic Church very quietly acknowledged that Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute,
as many people had been taught (Pagels, 2006; Lee, 2018a), laying the blame on Pope
Gregory the Great, who in 591CE gave his homily declaring Mary Magdalene was a
whore (Haag, 2016, p.233; Lee, 2018a; Pagels, 2006). As to be expected Pagels’ article
caused a backlash from the reverend Fathers.

In *Jesuit Scholar Debunks Prominant Da Vinci Code Supporter*, a feature written by
Jesuit Rev. Paul Mankowski, an expert in scripture and ancient languages, writes at
Catholic World News web forum that “Pagels’ scholarship is not just shoddy but
falsified...she makes it up...she is a very naughty historian...Pagels has escaped censure only because she draws conclusions that are in vogue in most modern academia” (Mankowski, 2006, pp.2-3). She is not an expert on Gnosticism or Coptic Christianity but a “lady novelist” (p.3). It is not unusual to expect such sexist and misogynistic comments by the reverend father since the Catholic Church is a clerical-patriarchal institution that is exclusive of women, and has in recent years been infected by cover-ups of sexual abuse of both women and children, a controversy that the papacy of Pope Francis has been tainted by (Christ, 2020; Litonjua, 2018; Pederson, 2017; Yallup, 2010; Jackowsk, 2004). Fiorenza propose that the appointment of women as cardinals would reduce the political power, getting rid of the misogynistic virus, and give women “the democratic means to determine the papacy and thereby the future of the Church (Fioenza, 1999, p.65). In the Catholic Church women cannot be ordained priest because Jesus did not choose women as apostles, nor do they represent the male image of Christ and God as she is different to creation.

While the burden of this thesis was to present an alternative interpretation of religious/spiritual ideology and to demonstrate how this alternative vision reorganises true relationships between the genders. I have sketched out a framework that would serve as a basis of a new religious education paradigm based on the ‘Feminine Principle’. The Feminine Principle is a philosophy based on wholeness and personhood rather than a philosophy of moral and ethical inequality. I have argued that the Feminine Principle is the untapped subtle potential that lies at the very core of our being, and it must be realised to restore the balance and harmony between intuition and intellect, feelings and facts, alongside of reason and realism (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Mills, 1987). I have shown how the rich insights contained in these principles can be utilised to supply a powerful heuristic for reconceptualising the patriarchal epistemology enshrined in the Genesis Creation story.
References


Dutton, P. D. The Paleolithic mother: Man’s first god. Themes & Dissertations paper 88
Retrieved from http://scholars.wlu.ca/etd


Retrieved from https://xyonline.net/content/mens-patriarchical-attitudes-and-sense-entitlement-relation-women-need-change-address-mens


Raming, I. (1981). 'Equal but other’ and the ordination of women. Theology Digest 29(1), 1-6


Torjesen, K. J. (1995). *When women were priests: Women’s leadership in the early Church and the scandal of their subordination in the rise of Christianity.* New York: Harper San Francisco.


Wijngaards, J. (2015). *Women were considered to be in a state of punishment for sin*. Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research. Retrieved from [http://www.womenpriests.org/women-were-considered-to-be-in-a-state-of-punishment-for-sin/](http://www.womenpriests.org/women-were-considered-to-be-in-a-state-of-punishment-for-sin/)


