

PLAY GUIDE

AN
ACT



OF



G O D

2016



2017



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An Act of God Play Guide written by Chloe Loos, ATC Artistic Intern, and Katherine Monberg, ATC Literary Manager.

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ABOUT ATC

Arizona Theatre Company is a professional, not-for-profit theatre company. This means that all of our artists, administrators and production staff are paid professionals, and the income we receive from ticket sales and contributions goes right back into our budget to create our work, rather than to any particular person as a profit.

Each season, ATC employs hundreds of actors, directors and designers from all over the country to create the work you see on stage. In addition, ATC currently employs approximately 50 staff members in our production shops and administrative offices in Tucson and Phoenix during our season. Among these people are carpenters, painters, marketing professionals, fundraisers, stage directors, sound and light board operators, tailors, costume designers, box office agents, stage crew - the list is endless - representing an amazing range of talents and skills.

We are also supported by a Board of Trustees, a group of business and community leaders who volunteer their time and expertise to assist the theatre in financial and legal matters, advise in marketing and fundraising, and help represent the theatre in our community.

Roughly 150,000 people attend our shows every year, and several thousand of those people support us with charitable contributions in addition to purchasing their tickets. Businesses large and small, private foundations and the city and state governments also support our work financially.

All of this is in support of our vision and mission:

The mission of Arizona Theatre Company is to inspire, engage and entertain - one moment, one production and one audience at a time.

Our mission is to create professional theatre that continually strives to reach new levels of artistic excellence that resonates locally, in the state of Arizona and throughout the nation. In order to fulfill our mission, the theatre produces a broad repertoire ranging from classics to new works, engages artists of the highest caliber, and is committed to assuring access to the broadest spectrum of citizens.



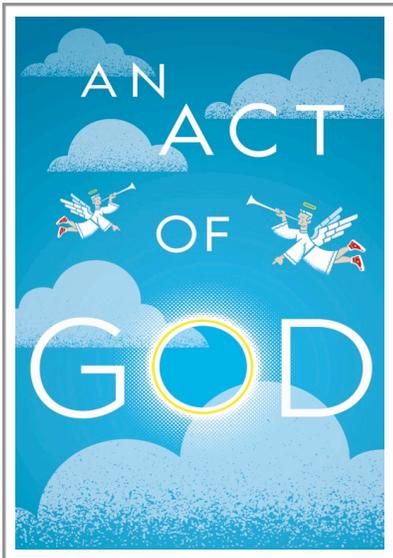
The Temple of Music and Art, the home of ATC shows in downtown Tucson.



The Herberger Theater Center, ATC's performance venue in downtown Phoenix.



INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY



Show art by Esser Design.

An Act of God

By David Javerbaum

Directed by Marsha Mason

God isn't happy, and She (that's right – She) is coming to Arizona to set the record straight – in no uncertain terms! You won't want to miss this sinfully funny and critically acclaimed new Broadway hit play in which God and Her angels answer some of the deepest questions that have plagued humankind since Creation. Written by 13-time Emmy Award winner David Javerbaum (*The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*), directing by 4-time Oscar nominated Marsha Mason, and starring the hilarious Paige Davis (host of television's *Trading Spaces*), this sweetly outrageous and gently irreverent new comedy is sure to be a heavenly highlight of the season.

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT



Playwright David Javerbaum.

David Javerbaum (Playwright) is an American comedy writer and currently an Executive Producer for Fusion Network (a joint venture network between ABC and Univision) to oversee development of a news satire block of programming. As the former Executive Producer of Comedy Central's *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, his work for that program, including four years as Head Writer, has earned him 11 Emmy Awards, two additional Emmy nominations, two Peabody Awards, and Television Critics Awards for both Best Comedy and Best News Show. He is one of the primary authors of the show's textbook parody *America (The Book)*, which sold over 2.5 million copies, spent a year on *The New York Times* Bestseller List (including 15 weeks at #1), won the James Thurber Prize for American Humor (his second), won the 2005 Quill Awards for Best Humor Book and Audiobook, and was named Publishers' Weekly's 2004 Book of the Year; the audiobook won a Grammy Award for Best

Best Comedy Album. The book's sequel, *Earth: A Visitor's Guide to the Human Race*, was released in September 2010. He was also Emmy-nominated for his work as a writer for *The Late Show with David Letterman* and wrote for the 2006



Academy Awards. He spent three years writing for the satirical newspaper and website *The Onion*, conceiving its 1999 *New York Times* #1 bestseller *Our Dumb Century* and contributing numerous articles to it and two other *Onion* books. His first book as sole author, *What to Expect When You're Expected*, was published by Random House in 2009. In 2011, his book *The Last Testament: A Memoir by God* was published by Simon & Schuster, and his affiliated Twitter account @TheTweetOfGod has over 1 million followers. Mr. Javerbaum and his frequent collaborator Adam Schlesinger (Fountains of Wayne) have won two Emmy Awards for Outstanding Original Music and Lyrics for their songs featured in the 2011 and 2012 Tony Awards, both performed by Neil Patrick Harris. They also received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Original Lyrics and Music for *A Colbert Christmas: The Greatest Gift of All!*, which won a Grammy for Best Comedy Album. On the stage, Mr. Javerbaum and Mr. Schlesinger also earned a 2008 Tony Award nomination for their songs in the Broadway adaptation of John Waters' film *Cry-Baby*, itself nominated for Best Musical. Mr. Javerbaum is a winner of the prestigious Kleban Award for Lyrics, and was the lyricist and co-librettist of *Suburb*, which won the Richard Rodgers Award for Musical Theater, as well as Best Off-Broadway Musical nominations from the Outer Critics Circle, the Lucille Lortel Awards, and the Drama League. Mr. Javerbaum is a graduate of NYU's Graduate School of Musical Theater Composition and Harvard University, where he wrote for the humor magazine *The Harvard Lampoon* and co-wrote two of that school's Hasty Pudding musicals. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife Debra and their daughters Kate and Sara. His hobbies include the succinct encapsulation of his achievements.

MEET THE DIRECTOR



Director Marsha Mason.

Marsha Mason (Director) has received four Academy Award nominations for her roles in the films *The Goodbye Girl*, *Cinderella Liberty*, *Only When I Laugh*, and *Chapter Two*. She has been the recipient of two Golden Globe Awards for her film roles and received an Emmy Award nomination for her role on *Frasier*. Her television credits have included her recurring role on ABC TV's *The Middle*, *The Good Wife*, *Madam Secretary*, and *Grace & Frankie*. While most know her from her roles on film and television, her Broadway credits include *Impressionism* with Jeremy Irons, *Steel Magnolias*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *The Good Doctor*, *King Richard III* and *Cactus Flower*. Regionally she has starred in *All's Well That Ends Well* at Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C., *A Doll's House* at ACT in San Francisco, *Arms and the Man* at Old Globe Theatre in San Diego and this coming February in *Watch on the Rhine* at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. She has directed *Chapter*

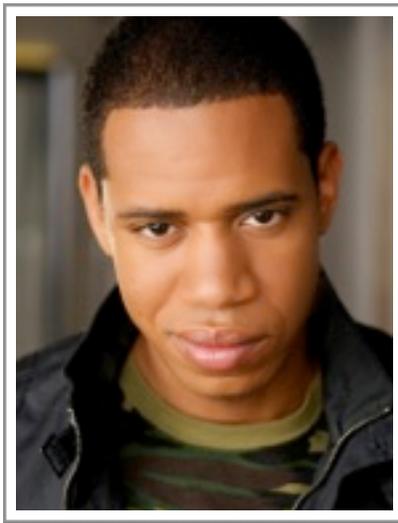
Two and *Steel Magnolias* at the Bucks County Playhouse. Ms. Mason has also taught acting at the HB Studio in New York City and has served as a member of the Tony Awards Nominating Committee.



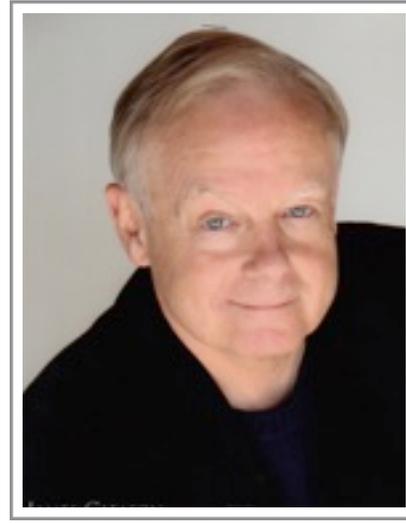
MEET THE CHARACTERS



Actor Paige Davis, who plays God in ATC's *An Act of God*.



Actor Max Lawrence, who plays Michael in ATC's *An Act of God*.



Actor James Gleason, who plays Gabriel in ATC's *An Act of God*.

God is the supreme deity and creator of the universe in monotheistic religions (those who worship a single deity). God is considered to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent with no corporeal body or gender; however, God is usually referred to with masculine pronouns. The different names given to God in different religions often emphasize certain elements of his character. In Trinitarian theology, God is thought to be composed of the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Ghost.

Michael, an archangel or an angel of high rank, known as the leader of God's Armies in the Book of Revelation. He has a special place in Jewish liturgy and acted as Israel's protector. In early Christianity, Michael was a healer and in current Catholicism he carries the souls of the dead to their judgment and weighs them on the scales of justice. Overall, he is known as a protector, warrior, and a figure of divine justice.

Gabriel, another angel, has traditionally been a messenger angel and was the angel to alert the Virgin Mary to the birth of Jesus. He is also known for blowing the horn to signal the return of Jesus to Earth, often a topic that appears in spiritual songs, even though his position as the trumpeter is somewhat inconsistent across the various branches of Christianity.



WORD SEARCH

Throughout time, mankind has worshiped thousands of gods and goddesses. Find the “false” gods from around the world hidden vertically, horizontally, and diagonally in the puzzle below!

A H D D U B W O C U W Z H A J H U L F W
L A W U A K I K O L I C O Y O T E I B V
R P H A Z K Y H F V A H C S I R I S O W
W D Q R R W U U H L U H T C T P T L D G
J X S H I V A J Z Z D D D U I W I P G I
L Q I V G M M A A R E H I C N D S K N S
W G S N O G A W A Y N E Y R A T T D D F
S G I M R C R N Z E X S J G K O R N W T
B I P Z O Y U A T R N I D J P A W A S G
A R W W H B B I M T O A W O D I N N W X
A F A O T E E X X R A M A K G A N O X U
L T A O C L A Z T E U Q K G N R T D S A
I U T R S E B L O L Z Z C S N A C I K P
H C B M R O V R I R A K I S N I O E P Z
I Z E U S Z R Z A M O M W E Y M P S U C
N S H M G A A E B H C A Y R N F C O N Z
A O F Q T N N A Q D M N G J B K W P H O
H W A H A W A E L E P A C W Y V I R S Q
V U S K D Z M A A Q I Z I N T I S W I G
L I I D J P M S K O F I Z B N L T U V P

AHRIM	ISIS	COYOTE	RAM	CTHULHU	POSEIDON	MARU
ANANANSI	JAH	DAGDA	TARYENYAWAGON	ENKI	SHIVA	ODIN
BUDDHA	OSIRIS	INTI	WOTAN	HERA	THOR	ORO
CYBELE	VISHNU	IZANAKI	QUETZALCOATL	ISHTAR	ZAMBA	PELE
FRIGG	ZEUS	KAMA	AKUJ	IZANAMK	EROS	
HINA	BAAL	PINGA	BRAHMA	LOKI	INDRA	

Created with The TeachersCorner.net Word Search Maker



THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

The Abrahamic religions can trace their common origin to Abraham, and share several unifying characteristics. All three of the major Abrahamic traditions – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam – believe that God revealed himself to Abraham, and are monotheistic in that they believe in a single god. Their respective religious texts share many similarities in figures, places, and histories, though each religion also embraces unique theological characteristics.



Pope Francis, the current Pope and Bishop of Rome.

Christianity

There are numerous Christian denominations, though there are many shared central beliefs and traditions among them. Christianity was originally founded in Palestine by the followers of Jesus, and presently predominates in Europe and the Americas, though it is present throughout most of the world.

The central philosophy of Christianity holds that Jesus is the Son of God and the second aspect of the Holy Trinity formed by God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus's life on earth and his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven are viewed as proof of God's love and forgiveness of humankind, and Christian teachings profess that eternal life and salvation are attained by faith in Jesus Christ. This philosophy is particularly derived from the New Testament of the Bible, though the Old Testament is also considered to be sacred and authoritative Scripture.

Christian ethics are largely derived from the Jewish tradition as described in the Old Testament and the Ten Commandments, but with some different interpretations influenced by the practice and teachings of Jesus. There are many different forms of Christian worship, as well as many variations of church organization and the designated roles of organized clergy, but worship and rites often include the use of sacraments conducted by trained clergy within organized churches.

In its 2,000 years, Christianity has experienced significant divisions based on differences in doctrine and organization, leading to three broad contemporary divisions: Roman Catholic, Orthodox Eastern, and Protestant, though there are numerous denominations within those generalized categories.



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church is led by the pope, the bishop of Rome, and may be very simply defined as Christians in communion with the pope. Generally, the church is divided into dioceses, each of which is led by a bishop (usually named by the pope), groups of whom are led by archbishops. Dioceses are divided into parishes, each of which has a church and a priest. Priests are trained in seminary, and do not marry.

To belong to the church one must accept the gospel of Jesus and the doctrine of apostolic succession as true, which posits that the pope and bishops represent varying degrees of the spiritual authority that Jesus designated to his apostles. Primary teachings include the objective existence of God, the practice of prayer, divinity of Jesus, immortality of the human soul, accountability upon death for actions in life, divine commission of the church, and the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and the cornerstone of ethical behavior is the love of God.

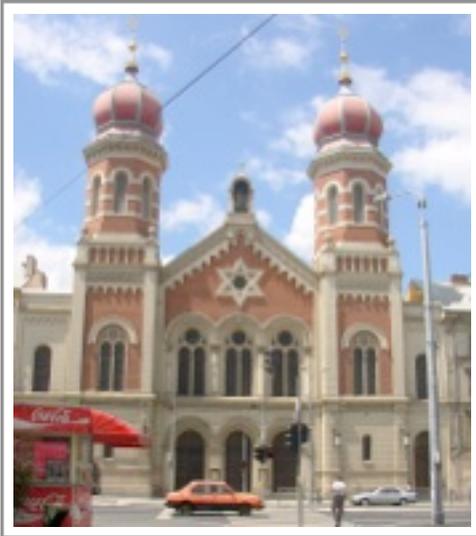
ORTHODOX EASTERN CHURCH

The Orthodox Eastern Church is a community of Christian churches primarily based in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, which doctrinally accept the authority of the church, but reject the leadership of the Pope. The standard rite of the church is known as the Byzantine rite and is always sung, but is not typically celebrated every day as in the Western tradition. The Orthodox Eastern Church observes the Eucharist and confession, but parish priests may marry prior to ordination. Churches are governed by a board of bishops and laymen known as a synod, often appointed by the government, and the head of a church is called a patriarch, but often serves as only the moderator of the synod.

PROTESTANTISM

A form of Christianity and practice that emerged from the principles of the 16th-century religious evolution known as the Reformation, which took place in Western Europe, arising from opposition to the doctrines and practices of the medieval (Roman Catholic) church. The rise of cities and the growth of the merchant and middle classes, in addition to the development of printing, sparked discontent and greater dissemination of information in the 16th century as new modes of religious and economic thought (i.e., capitalism) sought to restructure the status quo. In 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. Luther protested his excommunication, demanded by the pope in 1520, and Luther's proposed doctrine of salvation achieved by faith alone and not by sacraments and mediation by the church spread throughout Europe, chiefly embraced by absolutist rulers, merchants, capitalists, and peasants suffering under feudal policies. Economic, social, monarchical, and moral principles melded into a greater movement through the 16th century, sparking divisions which included Calvinism and Lutheranism, and was further fueled by King Henry VIII of England's break from Rome in 1534, which formally established the Protestant Church of England.

Judaism



The Great Synagogue, a Jewish house of worship in Plzeň, Czech Republic.

Judaism is the oldest of the monotheistic faiths, which affirms the existence of one God, Yahweh, with whom the descendants of Abraham entered into a covenant as God's chosen people. The holy writings of the Jewish faith include the Torah (specifically the five books of Moses), generally referred to as the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament by Christians, and the Talmud, a compilation of oral tradition which includes the oral law, or Mishnah.

According to Scripture, Abraham departed northern Mesopotamia for Canaan at the behest of God, who blessed the faithful among his descendants. Jacob (also known as Israel) was the son of Isaac, son of Abraham; twelve families descended from Jacob were enslaved in Egypt and led out of bondage by Moses. The Hebrews returned to Canaan after 40 years in the desert, claiming the Promised Land granted them by God from the local inhabitants.

The twelve tribes of Israel lived in a covenant association, with leaders known for wisdom and heroism, through the 11th century BC; the first monarchy was established by Saul in the early 11th century BC, during which Jerusalem was developed as the religious and political center of Israel, and a great temple was built. Following the death of Saul's son, Solomon, the kingdom was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah; during the rule of the kings, the writings of prophets in Israel and Judah emphasize Yahweh as God of Israel and the universe, the danger of worshipping other gods, and demands for social justice. Israel was then conquered by Assyria in 721 BC, and Judah was conquered by Babylon in 586, resulting in the mass exile of Judeans to Babylon.

The Judeans returned to Judea in 539 BC, which was then ruled as a Persian province. During this period, the scribes emerged as a new group of religious leaders, who would eventually become known as the Pharisees. Alexander the Great conquered Palestine in 332 BC, ending Persian rule; after his death, Judea was alternately ruled by Egypt and Syria. Syrian ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes attempted to eliminate Judaism and sparked a revolt led by the Maccabees resulting in Jewish independence in 128 BC, until the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 63 BC. Different interpretations of Judaism appeared during this period, primarily divided according to the teachings of the Sadducees (temple priests) and the Pharisees (teachers of the law). Several smaller sects also emerged, including the Apocalyptists, who awaited divine deliverance led by the Messiah; the Zealots, who sought national independence; and Hellenist Jews who combined Jewish religious tradition with Greek culture.



The Zealots revolted in 70 AD, inducing Rome to destroy Jerusalem and its temple. The Jews were subsequently scattered out of Israel and became targets of persecution throughout the world. Rabbinic Judaism developed as the primary expression of faith, emerging out of Pharisaic practice, and focused on Torah and synagogue; the Talmud began to take shape, the Scriptures were codified, and the 13 Articles of Faith were formulated by the Maimonides in the 12th century.

Two distinct branches of Judaism developed during the Middle Ages: Sephardic Judaism, based in Spain and aligned with Babylonian Jews, and Ashkenazic Judaism, emerging from the Franco-German region and affiliated with Rome and Palestine. Medieval Hasidism and attention to the Kabbalah also emerged as two forms of Jewish mysticism.

Anti-Semitism experienced a strong resurgence in the 19th century, culminating in the Holocaust of World War II, which claimed the lives of more than 6 million Jews. The Zionist movement was forged in response, resulting in the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

Modern Judaism includes synagogue worship, which includes readings from the Law (the five books of Moses known as the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) and the Prophets, and prayer. The commandments of the Torah are central to religious life, and include the practices of circumcision and observation of the Sabbath.

There are three primary expressions of Judaism today: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Generally, Jews do not attempt to convert others to their religion, but do accept newcomers to the faith; additionally, Jewish identity is not necessarily tied to acceptance of the Torah but rather to a cultural and historical identity, creating a strong secular, atheist, and agnostic presence within Jewish life.

ORTHODOX JUDAISM

Orthodox Jews follow traditional faith and practice, including a strict kosher diet and observance of the Sabbath.

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Conservative Judaism emerged during the mid-18th century, and follows most traditional practices including the authority of the Talmud, though change is more broadly incorporated into traditional practices than in other Judaic expressions.

Reform Judaism

Reform movements emerged out of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskala) during the 18th century in western Europe; Reform Jews emphasize the ethical and moral teachings of Judaism, and do not consider the Talmud (oral law) a divine revelation.



The Shah Jahan Mosque, a Muslim house of worship in Woking, Surrey, reportedly the first mosque in the U.K. (1889).

Islam

Islam is one of the three major monotheistic faiths, along with Christianity and Judaism, and was founded in Arabia between 610 and 632 by the Prophet Muhammad. At age 25, Muhammad left the caravan trade to embark on a life of contemplation, as a reaction against the immoral and polytheistic practices of the inhabitants of Mecca. After the Angel Gabriel announced to him in a vision that he was to be a prophet, Muhammad devoted his life to religious and societal reform, and the abandonment of Polytheism. Eventually rejected by leaders of the Meccan Quraysh tribe, Muhammad fled for

Medina in 622, which is noted as the formal establishment of the Muslim Era. Muhammad returned to conquer Mecca in 630, where he died in 632; his grave there remains a site of pilgrimage for Muslims worldwide.

Muslims, referring to the followers of Muhammad, revere him as the prophet of the one and only Allah (God), and the last of the prophets descended from Abraham and Jesus. The foundations of the Islamic faith are the Quran (or Koran), which is regarded as the true, eternal Word of God, and hadith (tradition) detailing the words and actions of Muhammad. Islam can be translated to “surrender to the will of Allah,” who determines the fate of all humanity; good deeds will be rewarded in paradise at the Last Judgment, and evil deeds will be punished in hell.

The primary duties of the Islamic faith are represented by the Five Pillars: profession of faith, daily prayer (five times each day), almsgiving, daylight fasting during the month of Ramadan, and hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca at least once in a lifetime (if possible) which includes homage to the ancient shrine of the Ka’aba, the most sacred site in Islam.

Muslims gather for communal worship on Fridays, during which prayers and a sermon take place at the mosque, which serves as both a house of worship and a center for the teaching of the Quran; the imam, or community leader, serves as the teacher and leader of prayer.

SUNNIS AND SHI’ITES

Disagreements regarding the succession of the prophet induced a division between two Islamic groups: the Sunnis and Shi’ites. Shi’ite tradition rejects the first three successors to Muhammad as usurpers and acknowledge the fourth, Ali, as the rightful leader of the faith, while the Sunni tradition recognizes all four successors as legitimate. From these, numerous other Islamic sects have been derived, including Sufism, which emerged as a form of mysticism in the 8th and 9th centuries.

THE GENDER OF GOD



God the Father by Cima da Conegliano, c. 1510-17.

The 239th catechism of the Catholic Church states “He is neither man nor woman: he is God.” This is the most commonly accepted idea of God’s gender; that He transcends the distinction between the binary sexes and is therefore gender neutral. However, God is most often referred to in masculine terms. While there is no consensus on why God (if He is genderless) is spoken of as male, some potential reasons for his traditional “male” image include Jesus’ reference to God as the Father, the active rather than passive role that God undertook in creation of the world, a need to separate God’s body from the polytheist image of Earth as a feminine entity, and the male preference demonstrated by patriarchal society. Some

contemporary Christian interpretations include gender-neutral or female terms in reference to God, and a few translations of the Bible explicitly use gender-neutral terms, such as the New Revised Standard version.

Despite the usual Bible translations that refer to God as masculine, there are numerous Bible verses that call attention to more feminine images of God as far back as Genesis 1:27 which notes that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them,” presenting a dual-gender concept of God. Other examples include Deuteronomy 32:18, which states “Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee,” which connects God to the concept of giving birth, and Isaiah 49:15, in which God says “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” in which God compares Herself to a new mother. While instances in which God appears as masculine are more numerous, these verses are important to consider when exploring the masculine and feminine elements of God.

The Trinity believes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (or ghost) to be three distinct persons who converge in one essence to comprise God in His entirety. While Jesus Christ as a person is evidently male, and while he himself refers to God as Father, it is the Holy Spirit who seems the least transparent regarding gender. The Holy Spirit was originally referred to by feminine words in Hebrew (*ruach*) and Syriac (*rucha*) – a language derived from Aramaic – and in gender-neutral terms in Greek, which are the three original Biblical languages. Only later, with languages such as Latin, did the word for spirit take on masculine connotations.



Furthermore, the feminine Hebrew word “rachpach” is used to describe God’s activity during creation, which further emphasizes the possibility of a feminine Holy Spirit. Another Hebrew word, “shekhinah,” is used to imply the presence of God in rabbinic writings (but not the Bible), providing another example of a feminine aspect. There are further examples of possible God-as-female connections in Christian apocrypha, which are works of uncertain authorship and/or authenticity, and therefore not fully accepted in the Biblical canon. One such reference appears in the Acts of Thomas from the third century, which refer to God as a hidden or compassionate mother.

While it is commonly accepted that God does not fit neatly into the binary definition of gender, there are evident references to various aspects of God’s personality and place as a parent, protector, creator, and numerous other facets. Despite the masculine words, there is a distinctive feminine streak in God’s essence that is important to keep in mind when considering Her actions. The Bible teaches that humankind is created in God’s image – male and female – and that (S)He serves as our celestial parents and therefore must have aspects of both genders.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments – known also as the Decalogue – are the humanitarian code of principles and ethics as given to Moses by God himself on Mount Sinai. According to the King James Bible, they are as follows:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image [and] Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not covet.



Moses with the Ten Commandments by Philippe de Champaigne, c. 1647.

Moses

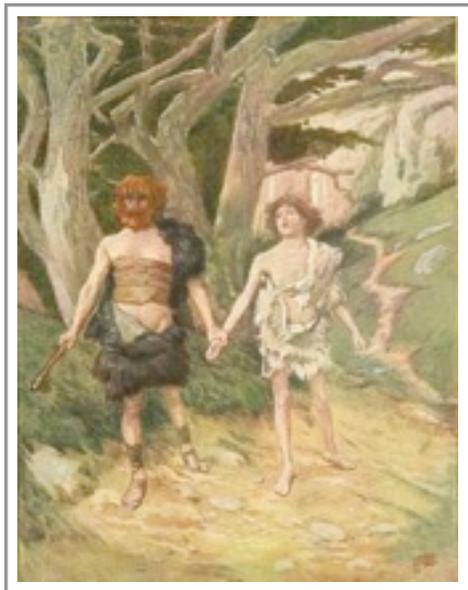
Moses' was an Israelite, born into slavery under the Pharaoh of Egypt; his mother hid him on the banks of the Nile River in response to the Pharaoh's order to kill all newborn Hebrew boys in an attempt to prevent future alliances with national enemies. Moses was later found by the Pharaoh's daughter and raised within the royal family. After killing a man who was beating an Israelite slave, Moses fled across the Red Sea where he encountered a burning bush that instructed him to return to Egypt and free the Israelite people from slavery. Following the ten plagues (blood, frogs, lice, flies, pestilence, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of the firstborn), the Israelites were freed and left Egypt, traveling toward Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments. He and the Israelite elders entered into an agreement with God that marked the Israelites as his chosen people. Moses then led his people to the Promised Land.



Adam and Eve as depicted in *The Fall of Man* by Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1628-29,

Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden

In Paradise, God created the first man, Adam, out of dust, and the first woman, Eve, from one of Adam's ribs. The pair were meant to act as caretakers of the Earth, but were forbidden to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge, that would impart awareness of good and evil. A serpent persuaded Eve to eat the fruit, which she gave it to Adam, leading to their banishment from Paradise. The story is important to the Christian beliefs of original sin and the fall of man, particularly regarding the perceived fault of woman, as Eve was then cursed to suffer during childbirth.



Cain Leadeth Abel to Death by James Tissot, c. 1896-1902.

Cain and Abel

Cain and Abel were a farmer and a shepherd, respectively, and were two of Adam and Eve's children. They each provided sacrifices of their labor to God, but God rejected Cain's gift of the fruit of the ground, preferring Abel's sacrifice of his first-born sheep. As a result, Cain slew Abel in a potential fit of envy. When God inquired after Abel's whereabouts, Cain lied and claimed that he didn't know. God then cursed him to be unable to farm and marked him as a fugitive; he also bestowed upon him the mark of Cain to ensure that nobody could kill him without incurring God's wrath, thereby forcing Cain to live forever with guilt and no means of livelihood.

Binding of Isaac

At the age of 75, Abram was told by God to leave his home and kin and go to a new land that he would be shown. At the age of 99, God renamed him Abraham, meaning "a father of many nations" and instructed him to perform circumcision. He also promised him a son (Isaac) that his wife, Sarah, bore at the age of 90. One day, God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but allowed an angel to interrupt the sacrifice, acknowledging Abraham's righteous and proven fear of God. Abraham sacrificed a nearby ram instead.

Lot

Lot was Abram's nephew. After learning of the plan to destroy Sodom, Abram begged God to spare the city if he could find ten good people within its boundaries. Two angels went to city, and were invited into Lot's home. Denizens of Sodom demanded that Lot reveal his guests so they could biblically "know" them; Lot refused and offered his daughters instead, which angered the mob. The angels blinded the men and told Lot and his family of the fate of the city, allowing them to escape. Unfortunately, Lot's wife looked back against the angel's explicit orders, and was transformed into a pillar of salt.

Job

Job was a good and righteous man who worshipped the Lord. Satan initiated a bet with God, insinuating that Job only believed in God because of his celestial protection. God then removed his divine protection to allow Satan to take Job's prosperity and family, but Job never denied God through his arduous fate. Job's friends asserted that he must deserve his unfortunate circumstances, but Job denied any wrongdoing on his own part; God then emerged from a whirlwind, improved Job's condition and chastised his friends.

Angels

The hierarchy of angels, and the rank of specific angels, varies depending on the religion and denomination. Most angels perform God’s will on earth, and many act as messengers. However, Michael and Gabriel are almost always considered to be archangels, which are the highest ranking among the angelic hierarchy.

GLOSSARY



Detail of *Armageddon* by Joseph Paul Pettit, 1852.

Armageddon: A conflict that will lead to the end of the world; in the New Testament, it refers to the last battle before the Day of Judgement.

Book of Revelation: The last book of the Bible, which describes the days before the final Judgement, Hell, and the New Heaven and New Earth.

Cabaret: A Kander and Ebb musical set in the Weimar Republic before the ascension of the Nazi Party.

Caitlyn Jenner: A transgender television star and Olympic athlete, formerly known as Bruce Jenner.



Caitlyn Jenner.

Calvary: Also known as Golgotha, the site where Jesus was crucified.

Canaan: A region in the ancient Near East in which the narrative of the Hebrew Bible takes place.

Cataclysm: A violent and sudden change.

Cubit: A measurement about the length of a forearm, or 18 inches.

Don McLean: An American singer-songwriter best known for “American Pie.”



Gutenberg Bible: The first mass-produced book using movable type. The book was written in Latin in Germany in the 1450s, and the 49 surviving copies are considered some of the most valuable books in the world.



Page from the Gutenberg Bible, on display at the New York Public Library.

Irish potato famine: A period of starvation and pestilence in Ireland between 1845 and 1852 during which one million people died and one million emigrated, causing the Irish population to decline by 20-25%.

Leviticus: The third book of the Bible, which provides ritual, legal, and moral instructions.

Mosaic Law: Another name for the Law of Moses, the doctrine expressed in the Torah, which includes the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Mount Sinai: The mountain in the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt where Moses received the Ten Commandments.

Moxie: Force, determination, nerve.

Muhammad: The central figure and founder of Islam, considered by the Muslim faith to be God's final prophet.

Old Testament: The first thirty-nine books of the Christian Bible; God is sometimes considered to be more harsh in the Old Testament than in the New Testament.

Passover: A Jewish holiday celebrating Egyptian freedom from slavery and the leadership of Moses. It is derived from a story in the book of Exodus in which God tells the children of Israel to mark their doors with the blood of a lamb to avoid the tenth Egyptian plague: the death of the first-born child. By doing this, their homes were passed over and their children spared.

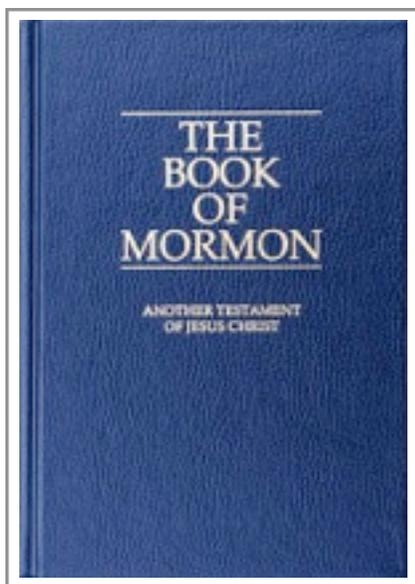
Phylogeny: A branch of biology focused on the evolutionary development and diversification of a species.



Summit of Mount Sinai, in Egypt.



The cupronickel Israeli new shekel, the present currency of the state of Israel.



The Book of Mormon, sacred text of the Latter Day Saint movement.



Trey Parker and Matt Stone, co-creators of South Park and the Broadway musical *The Book of Mormon*.

Puritans: English Reformed Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries who sought to continue the purification of the Church of England by eliminating Roman Catholic practices.

Red-shift: By using spectrology (the study of light) and the Doppler Effect (change in the frequency of sound or light waves as the distance between an object and observer changes), astronomers can use light and waves in space to determine the movement of cosmic objects. If an object is red-shifted, it is moving farther away from Earth, while something blue-shifted is moving closer.

Seder: A Jewish Passover ritual that involves the retelling of the Israelite liberation as delineated by the Book of Exodus.

Shekel: An ancient form of currency, still used in Israel.

United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit: A federal court with jurisdiction (and therefore the ability to review and change decisions made by lower courts) over the districts of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, and the Eastern, Northern, and Western Districts of Oklahoma.

The Book of Mormon: A sacred text of the Latter Day Saint movement, it is believed to contain writings of prophets from the American continent. It was published in 1830 by Joseph Smith who claimed to have found the narrative on golden plates written in “reformed Egyptian” under Cumorah Hill in New York, to which he was led by the angel of the man who originally buried them.

The Book of Mormon: A satirical musical by co-composer and co-lyricist of Avenue Q, Robert Lopez, and the creators of South Park, Trey Parker and Matt Stone. The musical follows two Mormon missionaries in a Ugandan village.

The Sixth Sense: A 1999 American film by M. Night Shyamalan well-known for its plot twist. It was nominated for six Academy Awards.



The Tower of Babel by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, c. 1525-1569.

Tommy Mottola: A music executive and co-owner of Casablanca Records. Some of his protégés include Diana Ross, Mariah Carey, Gloria Estefan, Shakira, and Jennifer Lopez. During his time at the head of Sony Music Group, he helped develop the careers of Destiny's Child, Celine Dion, and the Dixie Chicks.

Tower of Babel: A biblical myth used to explain the reasons for different language. After the great flood, humanity decided to build a tower to reach heaven. In response, God changed their speech so they couldn't understand one another and distributed humanity all over the world.

Via Dolorosa: A street in the Old City of Jerusalem upon which Jesus walked to his crucifixion.