

Suppressing Sophia: How the Lost Divine Feminine Distorts Christianity and Fuels Violence

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This paper explores a simple but explosive thesis: that the systematic suppression and marginalization of the Divine Feminine in Western Christianity has not only deformed the faith itself but also helped create the psychic and cultural conditions for violence and war. The argument begins with a sober historical recognition: Israelite religion, like its Ancient Near Eastern context, was already patriarchal. Within that framework, hints of a feminine divine—Wisdom/Sophia imagery, creation motifs, and the honoured yet constrained roles of women—never consolidate into a full-blown goddess tradition. What is distinctive in the Christian story is not a peaceful matriarchy lost, but a brief intensification of feminine-inclusive practice around Jesus and the earliest communities, followed by a renewed and systematized patriarchal closure. Drawing on depth psychology, feminist theology, and alternative histories of early Christianity, the paper weaves together two strands. Jung and Neumann interpret modern crisis as a consequence of one-sided patriarchal consciousness that represses the feminine principle and then suffers its return in destructive, collective eruptions. Feminist theologians and historians argue that Jesus’s radically inclusive dealings with women and sapiential dimensions of Christology were progressively neutralized by church fathers, councils, and imperial structures. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the lost Divine Feminine is not a romantic prehistory but a missing half of Christian wholeness, with real consequences for how power, violence, and peace are imagined.

Keywords: Divine Feminine, Sophia, anima, Carl Jung, Erich Neumann, Jesus Christ, early church, church fathers, patriarchy, feminist theology, ecofeminism, Marija Gimbutas, Riane Eisler, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether, violence, war, domination, archetype.

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1. Introduction: A Suppressed Half of God

1.1 Stating the central thesis: suppression of the Divine Feminine as a principal driver of violence and war

This paper begins from a stark claim: the suppression of the Divine Feminine in Western Christianity is not a marginal doctrinal error but a principal driver of violence and war. That does not mean it is the only cause of conflict, or that gender archetypes alone explain the tangled histories of empire, resource struggle, and political ambition. It means something more structural and more uncomfortable. When the image of God is narrowed to an exclusively masculine form, when authority is coded as command-and-control from above, when relationality, embodiment, care, and receptive wisdom are downgraded to secondary or merely private virtues, an entire civilization's imagination of power is distorted. The psychic and theological space in which peace might take root is hollowed out.

The argument here is that the "Divine Feminine" is not an ornamental add-on to an already complete theology. It names a set of qualities and symbols through which the human psyche understands God as relational, nurturing, immanent, and wise in ways that do not collapse into domination. When these dimensions are repressed in doctrine, liturgy, and institutional practice, they do not disappear. They sink into the unconscious, where they continue to act as denied needs and forbidden desires. In that buried state, they return not as calm integration but as projection, anxiety, and rage. Wars, persecutions, and sacralized violence are among the forms this return takes.

To say that the suppression of the Divine Feminine is a principal driver of violence and war is therefore to say that a one-sided God-image produces one-sided human beings and one-sided institutions, all of which are more likely to resolve conflict through force than through mutual transformation.

1.2 Situating the claim in a patriarchal Ancient Near Eastern and Jewish context

This claim can only be taken seriously if it is situated honestly in its historical setting. Ancient Israel did not emerge from a peaceful, goddess-centered utopia. It arose within a wider Ancient Near Eastern world already structured by patriarchy, where kings, priests, and fathers held primary authority, and where warfare was a normal instrument of political life. Israel's scriptures reflect that world: God is often addressed with masculine titles, covenant fidelity is written in terms of a husband and his bride, and women's lives are constrained by the expectations of clan and household.

At the same time, even within this patriarchal world, there are currents that complicate the picture. Wisdom literature personifies divine Wisdom as a woman who was with God in creation, calling from the streets and delighting in the children of humanity. Prophetic texts

sometimes picture God with maternal imagery, agonizing in labour or comforting like a nursing mother. Women appear as judges, prophets, patrons, and protectors, even if they do not overturn the dominant order. These moments do not amount to a fully developed cult of a goddess. But they indicate that the human religious imagination, even under patriarchy, gropes toward a more complex image of the divine than pure masculine transcendence.

The Christian story begins inside this already patriarchal matrix. Jesus does not abolish the gender order of his time, yet his practice disturbs it. Women accompany him as disciples, finance his movement, sit at his feet as students, and become first witnesses of the resurrection. Early house-churches meet under the leadership of women whose names are preserved in scattered greetings and marginal notes. In that sense, the Christian movement briefly intensifies the latent feminine-inclusive possibilities in Second Temple Judaism. The tragedy this paper traces is not the fall from a lost matriarchy, but the rapid reassertion and theological hardening of patriarchal patterns that both precede and outlive Jesus.

1.3 Why bring Jung, Neumann, and feminist theology into one argument

To connect the suppression of the Divine Feminine with violence and war, it is not enough to do either psychology or history in isolation. Depth psychology, particularly in the work of Jung and Neumann, offers a language for how symbols of masculine and feminine operate in the individual and collective psyche. These thinkers describe a modern consciousness that has over-identified with Logos: with abstraction, rational control, and vertical authority. In their view, the feminine pole of psychic life—embodiment, Eros, relatedness, and a wisdom that listens rather than commands—has been systematically devalued. When that devaluation is internal, it appears as personal neurosis, addiction, and relational breakdown. When it is collective, it contributes to ideological possession and large-scale eruptions of violence.

Feminist theology and historical studies of early Christianity provide the concrete, institutional side of the story. They document how women's leadership was gradually curtailed, how texts were interpreted to justify male-only authority, how the imagination of God was narrowed to male metaphors, and how dissenting or alternative strands were declared heretical or simply forgotten. They show that what Jung and Neumann describe as psychic imbalance has visible correlates in worship, governance, and doctrine.

Bringing these strands together allows for a more complete diagnosis. Psychological accounts that ignore theology risk treating the Divine Feminine as a free-floating symbol with no institutional history. Theological accounts that ignore depth psychology risk underestimating how deeply images of God shape unconscious dynamics of fear, aggression, and desire. By weaving them together, this paper argues that the loss of Sophia is at once an intra-psychic, ecclesial, and geopolitical event.

1.4 Clarifying terms: “Divine Feminine,” “patriarchy,” and “violence”

Because the language in this debate is easily misunderstood, a few key terms must be clarified from the beginning.

“Divine Feminine” in this paper does not mean that God is female in a biological or literal sense, nor that women are essentially one way and men essentially another. It is shorthand for a cluster of archetypal qualities and images—Wisdom/Sophia, Spirit as comforter, God as mother, the earth as living matrix, the soul as beloved—that have historically been coded as “feminine” in symbol and story. These images are indispensable ways of knowing God as relational, nurturing, receptive, and immanently present in creation. To affirm the Divine Feminine is not to deny the validity of masculine images of God, but to insist that one pole without the other becomes toxic.

“Patriarchy” is used here in a structural, not merely personal, sense. It names a system of organization in which men as a group hold primary power, where authority, property, and religious office are concentrated in male hands, and where beliefs, laws, and customs reinforce this arrangement as natural or divinely mandated. Patriarchy, in this sense, is not simply about individual prejudice. It is a pattern of relationships and institutions that shapes how power is wielded, how conflict is resolved, and how God is imagined.

“Violence” is taken in both a narrow and broader sense. Narrowly, it refers to physical harm: war, conquest, punishment, and bodily coercion. Broadly, it includes structural and symbolic violence: systems that deprive people and the earth of what they need to flourish, and religious or cultural narratives that legitimate such deprivation as necessary or sacred. The claim that suppression of the Divine Feminine is a principal driver of violence and war means that when the feminine face of God is denied, the conditions are set for both personal and structural forms of harm to appear as inevitable, rational, or holy.

With these definitions in place, the rest of the paper will trace how this suppression unfolds historically and psychologically, how it neutralizes key aspects of the work of Jesus, and how it feeds the logics of domination that make violence and war seem like realistic options rather than spiritual failures.

2. Naming the Divine Feminine: From Sophia to Anima

2.1 Wisdom/Sophia in biblical and Second Temple Jewish literature

Long before Christian theologians coined technical terms for the Trinity, Jewish writers were already wrestling with how to speak of God’s nearness, intelligence, and ordering presence in the world. One of the richest solutions to this problem appears in the figure of Wisdom—Sophia

in Greek. In the Hebrew Bible, especially in Proverbs, Wisdom is personified as a woman who stands in the streets and gates, calling out to the simple and the powerful alike. She is not merely an abstract quality of cleverness. She is described as a companion of God in creation, rejoicing before God and delighting in the inhabited world and in human beings. The language is extravagant: Wisdom is “established” before the foundations of the earth, present when the heavens are set in place, and intimately involved in the shaping of order from chaos.

In later Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, this figure becomes even more developed. In texts such as Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, Sophia is portrayed as a kind of radiant emanation or manifestation of God’s glory. She is sent out to dwell among human beings, seeks a resting place, and pitches her tent among a particular people. She both transcends creation and saturates it, penetrating all things and guiding the righteous. The imagery is consistently feminine, yet the writers are careful: Sophia is not a rival goddess set over against the one God of Israel. Rather, she is a way of speaking about the one God’s self-communication, using the grammar of a female figure who mediates, teaches, and indwells.

These Wisdom texts already hint at what later theology will call Christology and pneumatology. Some early Christian authors will see Christ as the incarnation of divine Wisdom, and the language about Spirit will overlap with Wisdom’s role as teacher and comforter. But even before those Christian reinterpretations, Sophia functions as a bridge. She allows a patriarchal monotheism to speak of divine immanence, intimacy, and delight without abandoning its commitment to one God beyond all images. In doing so, she preserves a feminine contour in the religious imagination: God is not only king, judge, and warrior, but also a motherly, wise presence that delights in creation and calls it to harmony.

2.2 Jung’s language: anima, Great Mother, and the feminine archetype

In the twentieth century, Jung approaches similar territory from the side of psychology rather than scripture. For Jung, the human psyche contains deep, universal patterns of image and behavior, which he calls archetypes. Among these, the feminine archetype occupies a central place. He distinguishes several faces or configurations of this archetype, two of which are especially relevant here: the anima and the Great Mother.

The anima, in Jung’s vocabulary, is the inner feminine figure in the psyche of a man, just as the animus is the inner masculine in the psyche of a woman. The anima appears in dreams, fantasies, and projections as a woman who fascinates, challenges, or guides. If she is repressed or denied, she becomes manipulative, fickle, or destructive; if she is integrated, she mediates feeling, empathy, creativity, and a living relationship to the unconscious. Jung’s case material, including his work with physicist Wolfgang Pauli, shows how seriously he took this figure as a bearer of insight into both inner and outer worlds. For him, the anima is not a mere “role” but a

psychic organ of relation, without which a man's consciousness becomes brittle and over-intellectual.

The Great Mother is a deeper, more impersonal layer of the feminine archetype. She spans the spectrum from nurturing, protective mother to devouring, engulfing force. Myths of earth goddesses, fertility deities, destructive storms, and abyssal waters all express dimensions of this pattern. The Great Mother holds together birth and death, growth and decay, security and terror. For Jung, cultures that have no conscious relationship to this archetype are not free of it; they are unconsciously ruled by it. When the Great Mother is demonized or banished from the sacred, she returns in the form of uncontrollable mass movements, irrational panics, and the fascination with annihilation.

When Jung speaks of the feminine archetype, he is not talking about women as empirical individuals. He is talking about a set of psychic structures that organize experience, imagination, and value. These structures can be honored or ignored, but they cannot be abolished. The more insistently a culture insists that true humanity is defined solely in masculine terms—rational, bounded, controlling—the more crudely the repressed feminine returns as chaos, hysteria, and violence.

2.3 Distinguishing essentialism from archetypal symbolism

The language of “feminine” and “masculine” is notoriously dangerous. It has often been used to justify rigid gender roles, biological determinism, and the subordination of women. Any argument that invokes the Divine Feminine must therefore distinguish clearly between essentialism and archetypal symbolism.

Essentialism says that women are essentially one way and men essentially another: women are caring, emotional, and passive; men are rational, active, and strong. This view treats social roles as direct expressions of biological sex and tends to present them as fixed by nature or God. It easily becomes a tool of oppression, because deviations from these norms can be stigmatized as unnatural or sinful. Essentialism also flattens real persons, who are always more complex than such crude binaries.

Archetypal symbolism, by contrast, recognizes that human cultures have repeatedly organized experience using gendered images, but it does not equate those images with actual women and men. When Jung speaks of the feminine archetype, he is not saying that women “are” the unconscious, the earth, or emotion. He is saying that the human psyche tends to picture certain modes of being—receptivity, relation, nurturing, cyclical time—in feminine terms. Those patterns live in men and women alike, and both sexes are called to integrate both poles.

Similarly, when biblical and early Jewish literature personify Wisdom as a woman, they are not simply projecting domestic stereotypes onto God. They are drawing on the cultural resonance

of the feminine as one who gestates, nourishes, and teaches, in order to say something about divine activity in the world. The danger is not in using the symbol, but in forgetting that it is a symbol and binding it tightly to one biological sex.

In this paper, the Divine Feminine is treated archetypically, not essentially. It refers to a symbolic complex: images of God and reality that emphasize relation over control, presence over distance, and mutuality over domination. Real women can embody or betray those qualities, just as real men can. The point is not to assign virtues to one sex, but to show that when an entire civilization ruthlessly suppresses feminine-coded ways of imaging God and relating to the world, it damages the psychic ecology for everyone.

2.4 The Divine Feminine as relational, embodied, and world-affirming principle

Seen in this light, the Divine Feminine names a principle rather than a demographic. Sophia in the Jewish scriptures, the anima and Great Mother in Jung's psychology, the Marian and Spirit traditions in Christianity, and the many goddess figures in other cultures all point toward a way of understanding divinity that is relational, embodied, and world-affirming.

Relational: The Divine Feminine emphasizes connection over isolation. Wisdom calls from the streets, not from a distant throne. She delights in being with human beings, not only ruling over them. In Jungian terms, the anima draws consciousness into genuine encounter with the other, softening the hard edges of ego and opening a channel to feeling. When this principle is neglected, God is imagined almost exclusively as a solitary will confronting the world from above, and human beings imitate that stance in their politics and personal lives. Conflict then tends to be framed as a clash of isolated powers rather than as a breakdown in relationship to be healed.

Embodied: The Divine Feminine affirms the body, the earth, and the rhythms of birth and decay as sites of divine presence rather than obstacles to be escaped. Wisdom is present in the patterns of creation, in seasons and cycles. The Great Mother holds the processes of gestation and decomposition together. In a Christian key, Marian and other feminine imagery can remind the church that the Word becomes flesh, not disembodied concept. When this embodied dimension is suppressed, spirituality floats above material realities and can easily ignore or even sanctify bodily suffering. War then becomes an abstract instrument of policy rather than a concrete assault on living bodies.

World-affirming: The Divine Feminine celebrates creation as something to be cherished and brought to flourishing, not merely as raw material to be subdued. Sophia rejoices in the inhabited world. Feminine archetypes are often associated with gardens, fields, and homes—places where life is nurtured and sustained. This does not mean that the feminine principle is always gentle; it can be fierce in protection and terrible in judgment. But its underlying

orientation is toward the preservation and deepening of life. When this orientation is missing, dominion over the earth is easily twisted into exploitation, and the destruction of landscapes and communities can be justified as necessary progress.

In sum, the Divine Feminine, as understood here, is not a rival deity to be enthroned in place of a masculine God. It is the half of the sacred image that keeps power from hardening into domination, transcendence from dissolving into distance, and holiness from being reduced to purity against life. Its suppression does not only harm women or marginal spiritualities. It destabilizes the entire symbolic economy in which a people imagines what it means to live together, to use force, to make peace, and to meet God in the face of the other.

3. Jung and Neumann: Repression of the Feminine as Cultural Pathology

3.1 Jung on one-sided Logos, shadow, and collective eruptions of violence

Jung's analysis of modernity begins from an imbalance inside the psyche. He sees Western consciousness as having over-identified itself with what he calls Logos: clarity, rationality, differentiation, control. Logos is not in itself a problem; it is an indispensable principle of consciousness. The trouble begins when Logos imagines it is the whole story and treats everything that does not fit its categories as inferior, childish, or dangerous. Feeling, imagination, the body, the irrational, the mysterious depths of the unconscious—these are all pushed down and away. In Jung's language, they become part of the shadow.

The shadow is not simply evil. It is the totality of what a person or a culture does not want to see about itself. This includes unacknowledged guilt and destructiveness, but also disowned vitality, desire, and creativity. When the shadow is not faced consciously, it is projected onto others. Individuals begin to see in their enemies the very traits they deny in themselves. Nations begin to imagine that all their own aggression, cruelty, and fear are located in an external foe. Jung reads the twentieth century, especially the world wars, as massive episodes of shadow projection. A Christian, rational, enlightened Europe that prided itself on progress and morality suddenly revealed an underworld of sadism, fanaticism, and nihilism that had been accumulating for centuries.

In this picture, the repression of the feminine is not a side note. The qualities coded as feminine—feeling, embodied empathy, intimacy with nature, tolerance of ambiguity—are among the first to be sacrificed when a culture consecrates Logos alone. The result is a brittle, masculinized consciousness that cannot admit weakness or dependency, that despises softness, and that fears the unconscious as a swamp of irrational forces. Such a consciousness is perfectly suited to technical efficiency and administrative rationality, but poorly equipped to restrain aggression or to grieve its own capacity for harm. When crisis comes, the thin moral shell cracks

and the repressed contents erupt with a ferocity that surprises those who had believed themselves civilized.

Jung's insistence that the unconscious will return, one way or another, is crucial for this paper's thesis. Suppression is never final. The more the feminine side of the psyche is disowned, the more violently it returns—often in forms that bear little resemblance to the soft, wise, mediating Sophia of the Wisdom traditions. Instead, it comes back as chaos, hysteria, and a fascination with destruction. Wars and revolutions, in this reading, can be seen as the convulsions of a psychic economy that has denied too much for too long.

3.2 Neumann's critique of patriarchal consciousness and "the crisis of our time"

Erich Neumann, one of Jung's most creative students, pushes these insights further into cultural critique. Where Jung often writes in a more clinical or mythic register, Neumann is willing to speak directly of "the crisis of our time" as a crisis of consciousness shaped by patriarchy. For Neumann, the history of human consciousness can be sketched as a movement from a primordial, undifferentiated participation in the maternal matrix of life toward increasing individuation. This movement has often taken the form of a heroic struggle against the Great Mother: the emerging ego wrests itself free from fusion with nature, establishing distance, autonomy, and the capacity for reflection.

In Neumann's telling, this heroic phase is necessary, but it is not the end of the story. At a certain point in cultural development, the one-sided exaltation of the heroic, patriarchal ego becomes destructive. The world is divided into light and dark, good and evil, spirit and nature, masculine and feminine, in increasingly rigid ways. The feminine principle is placed on the side of nature, body, and evil; the masculine on the side of spirit, law, and good. The old maternal ground is not integrated as a continuing source of life but pushed into the position of a conquered enemy. Patriarchal consciousness thus lives in a world it has declared to be fundamentally suspect, something to be subdued or transcended rather than embraced and tended.

Neumann argues that modern technological civilization, with its ability to manipulate nature on a planetary scale, is what happens when this one-sided patriarchal consciousness is armed with immense power. The same heroic ego that once helped humanity survive now threatens to annihilate humanity and the earth. He sees totalitarian movements, mass warfare, and ecological devastation as symptoms of a deeper imbalance: a culture that has developed Logos to an extraordinary degree but has not correspondingly integrated Eros—the capacity for relation, empathy, and mutual transformation. The crisis of our time is therefore not only political or economic. It is psychospiritual. It arises from a failure to complete the journey from heroic separation to conscious integration.

In this perspective, the suppression of the Divine Feminine is not simply a theological curiosity. It is one of the central mechanisms by which patriarchal consciousness maintains its one-sidedness. By devaluing feminine symbols and roles, by relegating women to the margins or idealizing them into passivity, a culture prevents itself from hearing the very voices and feeling the very impulses that could correct its course.

3.3 The Feminine as missing mediator between psyche, body, and world

Jung and Neumann both insist that the feminine principle functions as a mediator. It connects realms that a purely patriarchal consciousness is tempted to keep separate: psyche and body, self and other, human and nature, heaven and earth. When they speak of anima, Eros, or the Great Mother, they are pointing to the psychic mechanisms that allow a person to feel, in their bones, that these realms are not utterly alien to one another.

At the personal level, the inner feminine mediates between conscious ego and the unconscious. Dreams, intuitions, and creative impulses often come clothed in feminine imagery, especially for men, because the ego has associated its own identity with masculine traits. The anima acts as a bridge, inviting the waking mind to take seriously what rises from the depths. Without this bridge, the unconscious appears only as threat or temptation, something to be suppressed or conquered. The more ruthlessly this is attempted, the more alien and dangerous the unconscious becomes.

At the bodily level, the feminine principle mediates between spirit and flesh. It affirms that embodiment is not a prison for the soul but its native habitat. Feelings, sensations, and desires are not enemies of the spiritual life but raw material for transformation. In a culture where the feminine is denigrated, the body is easily treated as an object or a machine, to be exploited for labor, pleasure, or violence without regard for its dignity. Violence against bodies—whether through war, economic deprivation, or domestic abuse—becomes thinkable because the felt connection between self and other, between my flesh and yours, has been numbed.

At the ecological level, the feminine principle mediates between humanity and the earth. Archetypal images of Mother Earth, fertile fields, and nurturing waters remind the psyche that human life is nested within larger cycles of giving and receiving. When these images are suppressed, the environment is reduced to resources, and the destruction of ecosystems appears as mere collateral damage in pursuit of abstract goals. The loss of the Divine Feminine thus removes the symbolic infrastructure that would allow a society to experience the suffering of the earth as its own suffering.

In theological terms, the feminine as mediator prevents God from being imagined solely as a distant ruler or judge. Sophia, Spirit, and maternal metaphors for God suggest intimacy, accompaniment, and indwelling. Without such imagery, the divine becomes almost exclusively

associated with sovereign will and impersonal law. The structures of the psyche, the body, and the world are then left without a felt sense of sacred connection to one another. In that vacuum, power flows toward mechanisms of control rather than toward webs of relation.

3.4 War as the return of the repressed in collective form

If the feminine principle is systematically repressed, and if it functions as a vital mediator at multiple levels, then its return will be disruptive. Jung and Neumann both interpret collective crises, including war, as in part the return of what consciousness has refused to integrate. The shadow erupts, but it does not come alone. It brings with it distorted forms of the repressed feminine.

One way this happens is through projection. A nation that has disowned its own vulnerability, dependency, and aggression projects these traits onto an enemy. That enemy is feminized and demonized at once: described as weak and decadent, yet also as a seductive, corrupting force that must be dominated or annihilated. The actual feminine, in the form of women and children, becomes collateral damage. The war is unconsciously fought not only against another people but against the unwanted parts of the self that have been symbolically lodged in that people.

Another way the repressed feminine returns is in the emotional tone of mass movements. The frenzy of rally crowds, the ecstatic surrender to a leader, the willingness to merge one's individuality into a collective cause—these can be understood as perversions of genuine experiences of belonging and communion. They are the shadow side of Eros. Where authentic Eros would connect persons in mutual recognition, these mass experiences fuse them in mutual intoxication. The Great Mother archetype, denied as a source of nourishment, comes back as a devouring womb in which individuals disappear into the body of the nation or the party.

War itself can become a kind of sacrament of this distorted archetypal economy. It promises purification, rebirth, and renewed unity through blood. The suffering of bodies is rationalized as necessary sacrifice. The destruction of cities and landscapes is framed as a cleansing fire that will make way for a new order. In these narratives, the life-giving and life-taking aspects of the Great Mother are fused into a single, terrifying figure that is no longer consciously recognized as feminine at all. She appears instead as Fate, History, or Destiny, impersonal and irresistible.

Interpreted through this lens, the repression of the Divine Feminine is not a minor contributing factor to war. It is one of the deeper reasons why war can be invested with such a potent, quasi-religious charge. When the relational, embodied, world-affirming face of the sacred is excluded from official theology and marginalized in cultural imagination, the longing for connection and transformation that it carries does not disappear. It seeks other outlets. If those outlets are not provided in the form of conscious integration—in psychology, spirituality, and social

structures—they will emerge in the form of collective possession. War is one of the most destructive of these emergent forms: a dark sacrament in which a culture unconsciously tries to resolve conflicts that it has rendered unthinkable in any other way.

4. Jesus and the Feminine within a Patriarchal Judaism

4.1 Women as disciples, patrons, and witnesses in Jesus's ministry

Jesus conducts his ministry inside a world where formal religious authority is overwhelmingly male. Priests, scribes, synagogue leaders, and most recognized teachers of Torah are men. Within that frame, the Gospels preserve a surprisingly dense cluster of women who are not only recipients of charity or healing, but active participants in the movement.

Women appear as disciples in the simple sense of people who follow, listen, and learn. They sit at Jesus's feet in the posture of a student rather than standing in the doorway as servants. They travel with him from place to place, not merely waiting at home for news. Some are explicitly named as those who "followed" from Galilee to the cross and on to the empty tomb, indicating sustained participation rather than a single encounter.

Women also appear as patrons. Several are described as providing for Jesus out of their own resources. This implies financial autonomy and public association with his controversial mission. Aligning one's wealth with an itinerant preacher who confronts established authorities is not a private devotional act; it is a political and social risk. That women take this risk suggests that Jesus does not restrict the serious work of the Kingdom to men.

In the resurrection narratives, women become the first witnesses. While the male disciples flee, deny, or hide, women go to the tomb, encounter the risen Christ, and are commissioned to carry the message to the others. In a context where women's courtroom testimony is often discounted, the choice to root the central claim of the faith in the experiences of women is theologically significant. It suggests that Jesus is willing to entrust the most crucial revelation of his identity to those the culture regards as secondary.

These details do not yet amount to a full doctrine of the Divine Feminine, but they sketch a pattern: women are not marginal extras on the edges of a male drama, but central actors whose bodies, voices, and resources are integral to what Jesus is doing.

4.2 Table fellowship, healing, and boundary-crossing in a patriarchal society

Jesus's way of relating to people repeatedly crosses boundaries that structure honor and shame in his society. Many of those boundaries are gendered. Meals, in particular, are places where

social distinctions are both enforced and contested. Who is invited, who reclines, who serves, who speaks: these are not incidental details but enactments of a social order.

Jesus allows women of questionable reputation to approach him in public spaces, to weep over his feet, to touch him, and to let down their hair, gestures that would ordinarily evoke scandal. He responds not by distancing himself in order to protect his honor, but by reframing the situation as a lesson in love, forgiveness, and hospitality. In doing so, he implicitly challenges the codes that tightly control female bodies and sexual reputations while giving men more latitude.

His healings also break gendered norms. He touches and is touched by women whose conditions render them ritually problematic, such as the woman with chronic bleeding. Rather than worrying about contagion from impurity, he draws attention to their faith and calls them daughters of Abraham, a title that places them on equal spiritual footing with the sons. He speaks directly to women in public, including those considered religiously or ethnically suspect. The Samaritan woman at the well becomes not merely a recipient of living water but a kind of apostle to her town.

These acts are not simply individual gestures of kindness. They signal a different vision of how holiness works. Holiness is not maintained by rigid separation of male and female, pure and impure, insider and outsider. It is expressed by a power that moves outward in compassion and inclusion, without fear of contamination. The Divine is experienced not as a fragile purity that must be protected from contact, but as a robust life that can endure and transform contact.

In a patriarchal society where women's presence in public spaces is carefully managed and their religious agency is limited, this pattern of table fellowship and healing is a form of boundary-crossing that carries implicit critique. It does not overthrow the social order in one stroke, but it opens gaps in it where new ways of being together become visible.

4.3 Echoes of Sophia-Christology in words and deeds of Jesus

Alongside these social practices, the language used about Jesus and the way he speaks of his mission evoke themes associated with Sophia in Jewish wisdom literature. Wisdom is portrayed as present with God in creation, calling out in public places, inviting the weary and simple to her table, offering food and drink that lead to life. She is both a teacher and a host, both divine and accessible.

Jesus speaks in sayings that resonate with this tradition. He calls the weary and burdened to come to him for rest and promises a yoke that is easy, an echo of Wisdom's invitation to learn and live. He speaks of himself as bread, as living water, as a shepherd who knows his own and calls them by name. These are all images of nourishment, guidance, and intimate knowledge rather than of distant rule.

In some strands of early Christian reflection, Christ is explicitly identified with divine Wisdom. The Logos through whom all things are made looks very much like the Sophia who was with God in the beginning. Even where that identification remains implicit, the pattern is clear: Jesus is not only a bearer of message but the embodiment of a divine principle that orders, sustains, and invites.

This connection does not require that Jesus be imagined as feminine. It does, however, suggest that the qualities attributed to him—gentleness, hospitality, a willingness to dwell with the lowly, a concern for everyday bodily needs—are not accidental. They are expressions of a Wisdom that has long been personified in female form. In this sense, his ministry can be read as a concrete enactment of Sophia's work: calling, teaching, feeding, healing, and drawing people into a relationship with God that is intimate rather than merely juridical.

Such echoes of Sophia-Christology are crucial for any argument about the Divine Feminine in Christianity. They show that Christian talk of the Word made flesh is not only about a masculine figure entering the world, but also about a long-standing Wisdom tradition, with its feminine inflections, taking on a specific human life and voice.

4.4 Jesus's pattern of relation versus the prevailing gender order

When Jesus's interactions with women, his boundary-crossing practices, and his Wisdom-like self-descriptions are set against the prevailing gender order of his time, a contrast emerges. That contrast is not absolute; Jesus does not inaugurate a modern egalitarian society, nor does he publicly dismantle all inherited structures. Yet his pattern of relation points in a different direction from the one that will later be codified by many church leaders.

The prevailing order tends to see women as primarily defined by their roles in the household, as bearers of male honor or shame, as potentially defiling if not properly controlled. Religious learning and leadership belong officially to men. Public spaces of debate and authority are male domains. In this frame, women's religious lives are mediated through fathers and husbands, and their direct relationship to God is often obscured.

Jesus, by contrast, addresses women directly, praises their faith in front of others, and allows them to model discipleship. He commends a woman's extravagant anointing of his body as a paradigmatic act of love and frames it as preparation for his death, assigning it theological weight. He describes women performing ordinary tasks, such as sweeping a house or baking bread, as images of the Kingdom of God, thereby inscribing everyday female labor into the sphere of revelation.

This pattern does not abolish difference, but it decenters the hierarchy that binds spiritual significance to male status. It suggests that proximity to God is measured not by sex, lineage, or ritual role, but by responsiveness to the call of love and justice. Women, in this scheme, are not

derivatively holy through their association with holy men; they are themselves bearers of insight, courage, and devotion that can instruct the whole community.

From the standpoint of this paper's thesis, Jesus's pattern of relation can be seen as a brief, intense surfacing of the suppressed half of the divine image within a patriarchal world. The qualities traditionally associated with the Divine Feminine—compassion that crosses purity lines, embodied care for the sick and hungry, Wisdom calling in the ordinary places of life—are concentrated in his ministry and shared with those who follow him, including women. The tragedy that subsequent sections will explore is how quickly this pattern is constrained, domesticated, and reinterpreted in ways that reassert male control and narrow the image of God once more.

5. Early Christian Communities: Feminine Inclusion under Pressure

5.1 House-churches, prophets, deacons, and bishops who were women

The earliest Christian communities gathered not in purpose-built sanctuaries but in homes. These house-churches were not simply convenient meeting spaces; the households themselves were the basic cells of social, economic, and religious life. When a community met in someone's home, that person—and often that person's household—became the practical and symbolic center of the local church.

The surviving texts preserve a striking number of women in precisely these positions. A cluster of names appears in early Christian letters: Prisca (or Priscilla), Lydia, Nympha, Chloe, Apphia, the "elect lady," and the mother of John Mark. They are associated with churches that meet in their homes, with leadership in resolving conflicts, and with missionary support. Later summaries of this evidence note that these women were understood by their contemporaries as leaders of house-churches, not simply as hospitable hostesses.

Alongside house-church leadership, explicit ministerial titles begin to surface. Phoebe is commended as a deacon of the church at Cenchreae and a benefactor of many; Junia is named as outstanding among the apostles; Prisca and her husband Aquila are described as co-workers who risk their necks for Paul's life and who instruct other teachers more accurately in the Way. Contemporary scholarship often reads these designations quite straightforwardly: Phoebe refers to a recognized ministerial role, Junia belongs to the circle of apostolic missionaries, and Prisca functions as a teacher and perhaps co-leader of a congregation.

Beyond the New Testament, inscriptions and later testimonies suggest that women continued to serve as deacons, prophets, and even bishops in some locales during the first centuries, before later prohibitions solidified. One major historical study argues that "once upon a time women

indeed were priests,” bishops, and prophets in early Christianity, and then traces how and why their roles were gradually restricted. Another landmark work systematically reconstructs the participation of women in Christian origins, insisting that the textual tradition is androcentric and that much of what women did must be recovered through careful, critical reading.

Taken together, this evidence shows that the early Jesus movement did not start from a cleanly segregated model in which men taught and ruled while women silently supported. Rather, within the constraints of their time, women were already functioning as disciples, patrons, hosts, deacons, apostles, and leaders. The pattern of feminine inclusion was real, even if fragile.

5.2 How Greco-Roman respectability and Jewish–Gentile tensions shaped gender roles

If the first generation of Jesus-followers included women in visible leadership, why did that pattern come under pressure? Part of the answer lies in the social environment. The early communities existed within a Greco-Roman world that prized respectability, order, and clear hierarchies in the household. The household codes that appear in the New Testament—the instructions to wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters—are recognizably similar to other moral exhortations in the broader culture.

These codes emphasize the authority of the male head of household and the submission of wives, children, and slaves. Early Christian writers adapt this familiar form, sometimes modifying it with reciprocal duties and a call to mutual care, but without overturning its basic structure. This adaptation can be read as an apologetic strategy: by showing that Christians uphold conventional family order, leaders hope to allay suspicion that the new movement is socially subversive or morally lax. In a world where accusations of sexual immorality, disorderly gatherings, and disrespect for ancestral customs could draw official hostility, presenting an image of well-disciplined households under male leadership was a way to survive.

At the same time, the early communities navigated tensions between their Jewish roots and an increasingly Gentile membership. Jewish followers of Jesus carried with them traditions of law observance, synagogue practice, and patterns of gender separation in religious life. Gentile converts brought different expectations and were often drawn from urban networks where women could gain status as patrons, business owners, and heads of households. The result was a complex negotiation: some congregations leaned more toward Jewish norms, others toward Greco-Roman ones, and many tried to balance both.

In that negotiation, female leadership became a sensitive point. On the one hand, the memory of Jesus’s inclusive practice and the lived experience of women already in leadership argued for continuation. On the other hand, pressure to appear respectable to both Jewish and Gentile observers pushed communities toward patterns that reassured the wider culture: male heads of households visibly in charge, women in more circumscribed roles. Over time, what began as

pragmatic concessions could harden into theological principles, especially when written codes and letters were read without remembering the more fluid, charismatic realities of earlier years.

Thus, Greco-Roman respectability politics and Jewish–Gentile tensions did not simply “erase” women from one day to the next. They created a climate in which practices that once embodied Christ’s boundary-crossing hospitality were gradually reinterpreted in more conventional, patriarchal terms.

5.3 The slow erasure of women’s leadership from official memory

The presence of women leaders in early Christianity is a matter not only of what happened but of what was remembered—and how. The textual and interpretive tradition is, as one influential study puts it, androcentric: written largely by men, from male perspectives, and preserved by male-dominated institutions. This does not mean the texts are useless; it means that what they omit or minimize can be as revealing as what they state.

The erasure of women’s leadership from official memory proceeded through multiple mechanisms. Some were subtle. The names of women who host churches or labor “much in the Lord” are recorded, but their exact roles are left unexplained, allowing later readers to imagine them as pious helpers rather than leaders. Titles such as deacon or apostle attached to women are downplayed, disputed, or retranslated in less authoritative ways. Debates over whether Junia was really a woman at all, or whether her title meant what it seems to mean, are examples of how later interpreters struggled against the plain sense of the text.

Other mechanisms were more direct. As ecclesial offices became more formalized and tied to ordination and sacramental authority, canons were issued that barred women from the altars and episcopal chairs they had previously occupied. Stories of female prophets and bishops receded from mainstream hagiography or were recast in ways that emphasized their obedience and modesty rather than their authority. Artistic depictions of early community life increasingly centered on male figures. The narrative arc of Christian history as told in official teaching emphasized apostolic succession through male bishops and priests, leaving little room for alternative memories.

Scholars who have revisited this history with feminist questions in mind have shown how the process of forgetting worked in tandem with the consolidation of patriarchal structures. It was not that women suddenly stopped serving or that their contributions ceased. Rather, their leadership was reinterpreted, re-described, or simply not recorded, while texts that subordinated women were copied, circulated, and highlighted as normative. The very fact that later readers must dig to reconstruct women’s roles is itself evidence of a deliberate or unconscious filtering of memory.

In theological terms, this slow erasure constitutes more than a sociological shift. It represents a narrowing of the church's self-understanding. A body that once knew itself as animated by gifts poured out on sons and daughters, slaves and free, old and young, increasingly came to see itself as governed from the top by a sacrally marked male elite.

5.4 "Neutralizing" Christ's work: betrayal, drift, or tragic adaptation?

Given this history, how should one name what happened to the feminine-inclusive pattern visible in Jesus's ministry and the earliest communities? To say that Christ's work was "neutralized" by the suppression of the Divine Feminine is a strong claim. It invites moral judgments: was this a betrayal, an unintended drift, or a tragic adaptation to hostile circumstances?

One way to read the story is as betrayal. From this perspective, Jesus inaugurates a way of being in which women and men together embody the Kingdom, where holiness crosses purity codes, where authority is measured by service rather than sex. The early communities experience this as liberating reality. But as institutional interests and cultural pressures mount, leaders consciously or unconsciously choose respectability over fidelity. They appeal to Scripture selectively, emphasize texts that shore up male dominance, and silence voices that challenge it. In this reading, the suppression of women's leadership and the feminine image of God is a direct contradiction of Christ's example.

Another way to read the story is as drift. Here, no single moment of decision or conspiracy is imagined. Instead, a series of small, understandable choices accumulate. A community adopts a more conventional household code to ease relations with neighbors. Another chooses a male leader to avoid scandal. A scribe, puzzled by a female apostle, assumes a copyist's error and "corrects" the name. Over generations, these micro-decisions produce a macro-shift: the church's embodied life moves away from its founding pattern without anyone fully intending it. The neutralization of Christ's work is real, but it happens through slow erosion rather than deliberate sabotage.

A third reading highlights tragic adaptation. It acknowledges the real dangers faced by early Christians: persecution, slander, social ostracism. Leaders may have believed that tightening gender roles and aligning more closely with prevailing norms was necessary to protect communities and ensure the survival of the faith. In this view, the patriarchal turn is not simply moral failure but a costly trade-off: the church preserves its existence at the price of dimming some of its original light. The tragedy lies in the fact that what seemed like a prudent adaptation also entrenched structures that would perpetuate violence, exclusion, and theological imbalance for centuries.

These readings are not mutually exclusive. Elements of betrayal, drift, and tragic adaptation can coexist in the same story. The point for this paper's thesis is that, whatever mixture of motives and forces one discerns, the net effect was to blunt a radical reconfiguration of gendered holiness that Jesus had made imaginable. By reinstating and sacralizing a one-sided patriarchal order, the church not only limited women but also reshaped its image of God and power. That reshaping, in turn, fed into wider cultural patterns of domination and justified forms of violence that a more balanced, Sophia-infused Christianity might have resisted.

To say that the suppression of the Divine Feminine neutralized some of Christ's work is therefore to say that the church, under pressure, stepped back from the full implications of its own gospel. It carried forward the name of Jesus, the story of the cross and resurrection, and a powerful ethic of love in many areas. But in leaving half of the divine image under a cloud, it left itself vulnerable to the very pathologies of power and violence that Christ's way was meant to heal.

6. Councils, Fathers, and the Tightening Patriarchal Frame

6.1 Canon formation and the marginalization of alternative voices

The New Testament did not descend from heaven as a fixed list. For several centuries, diverse communities read, copied, and prayed with a wide range of texts. Some of these eventually became canonical; others were judged edifying but secondary; still others were rejected as heretical or dangerous. The process by which the canon was formed was complex and partly opaque, involving local practice, theological controversy, and emerging institutional authority.

The criteria often named in later summaries—apostolic origin, orthodox teaching, widespread use—were not neutral. "Orthodox" was defined in the course of struggle, and "widespread use" reflected which communities had influence and staying power. Texts associated with marginal groups, contested theological positions, or suspect forms of spirituality were less likely to be preserved, let alone canonized. In a world already marked by patriarchal assumptions, this meant that works which foregrounded feminine imagery, honored women's leadership, or experimented with alternative cosmologies were at a disadvantage.

Some non-canonical writings present women as authoritative teachers and recipients of esoteric instruction. Others speak of the divine in terms that blur or transcend strict gender binaries, or that place emphasis on Wisdom and Spirit in ways that could have fostered a richer sense of the Divine Feminine. Even within the documents that would become canonical, there are tensions: letters and narratives that continue the inclusive impulses of Jesus and those that pull back toward conventional household order. As the canon solidifies, the latter voices are

heard more clearly, both because they were more acceptable to emerging structures of authority and because they were easier to integrate into existing social norms.

Canon formation thus did more than sort better from worse theology. It narrowed the range of remembered Christian possibilities. Communities that cultivated prophetic women, emphasized Sophia-like aspects of Christ, or experimented with more mutual forms of leadership were increasingly written out of the main story or remembered only as heretics. The official memory of the early church came to be told primarily through texts that could be read as supporting male headship, hierarchical order, and a predominantly masculine image of God. Alternative voices did not vanish without trace, but their marginalization made it far harder for later generations to imagine that Christianity had ever been otherwise.

From the perspective of this paper's thesis, canon formation is one of the early mechanisms by which the Divine Feminine was edged out of the center of Christian imagination. The scriptural field that would guide devotion, doctrine, and ethics was pruned in such a way that Sophia's voice, while not entirely silenced, became softer and easier to ignore.

6.2 Dogmatic consolidation of a purely masculine Trinity

If canon formation set the textual stage, the ecumenical councils and the theologians who fueled them supplied the dogmatic framework. Faced with divergent interpretations of Christ and the Spirit, church leaders sought to articulate a coherent doctrine of God that could anchor unity and fend off what they saw as dangerous teachings. In the process, the way Christians spoke about the divine became more precise—and more rigidly masculine.

The emergence of Trinitarian doctrine involves a complex interplay of scriptural exegesis, philosophical categories, and liturgical practice. The language of Father, Son, and Spirit is rooted in the New Testament, which itself draws on Jewish address to God as Father, on Jesus's filial consciousness, and on the experience of the Spirit in the community. Early theologians also inherit Wisdom traditions and Logos speculation, in which the divine Word or Wisdom is with God in the beginning and active in creation.

Over time, however, the masculine elements of this symbolic field are elevated to formal dogma, while the feminine inflections recede. "Father" and "Son" become not only relational metaphors but quasi-ontological names. The Spirit, grammatically feminine in Hebrew and often imaged with maternal traits, loses some of that contour as the theological discourse moves into Greek and Latin. The personal names of the Trinity are all read with masculine pronouns. Official creeds speak of "God the Father almighty" and "his only Son," leaving Sophia unmentioned.

Nothing in classic Trinitarian doctrine asserts that God is male in a biological sense. Many theologians explicitly deny that God has gender. Yet, in practice, the exclusively masculine naming of the divine persons, combined with a collective amnesia about feminine images of

God, produces a functional monomorphism: the face of God presented to the faithful is overwhelmingly that of a Father and a Lord. This has two effects relevant to the present argument.

First, the feminine aspects of the divine life—nurturing, birthing, comforting, indwelling—are either absorbed into the masculine names or redistributed in less explicitly divine figures, such as Mary and the saints. The Divine Feminine is displaced from the innermost doctrine of God to the periphery of devotion. Second, the masculine Trinity becomes a template for social order. If ultimate reality is structured as an eternal hierarchy of Father and Son, then hierarchies of men over women, clergy over laity, ruler over ruled can be imagined as reflections or analogies of divine life. Even when theologians nuance these analogies, the intuitive association remains powerful.

Dogmatic consolidation thus tightens the patriarchal frame not only by focusing on masculine names for God but by sacralizing certain patterns of authority and obedience. Once the Trinity is codified in this way, attempts to reintroduce Sophia or to highlight maternal metaphors for God can be dismissed as marginal piety or even as threats to orthodoxy.

6.3 Mary as compensatory feminine: exalted yet domesticated

Within this increasingly masculine theological architecture, Mary emerges as the most prominent feminine figure in Christian devotion. The proclamation of her as Theotokos, “God-bearer,” affirms that the one she births is truly divine, safeguarding the unity of Christ’s person. At the same time, it places a woman in an unparalleled position of intimacy with God. Marian hymns and prayers celebrate her as mother, intercessor, and queen; art surrounds her with angels and crowns.

On one level, this Marian prominence functions as a compensation for the absence of the Divine Feminine from official Trinitarian discourse. The longing for a maternal, tender, approachable aspect of the sacred finds an outlet in devotion to Mary. For many believers, Mary is the face of mercy, the one to whom one can bring fears and needs that feel too small or too shameful to present directly to an austere Father or a crucified Son. She softens the image of God without formally altering dogma.

Yet the way Mary is constructed in doctrine and piety also domesticates the feminine. She is praised for her obedience, humility, perpetual virginity, and submission to God’s will. Her strength is expressed in her willingness to accept suffering and to stand silently by the cross, rather than in public teaching or leadership. She is almost never depicted as a prophet delivering uncomfortable messages to the powerful, as some biblical women were, nor as a charismatic leader of a mixed-gender community. Instead, she becomes an icon of ideal womanhood defined by purity and maternity.

This combination of exaltation and domestication allows the church to honor a feminine figure without disturbing male control of doctrine, sacrament, or governance. The sacred feminine is safely located in a single, extraordinary woman whose uniqueness limits her relevance as a model for ordinary women's worldly roles. Devotion to Mary can coexist with structures that limit women's authority and voice in the church; indeed, it can be used to enforce those limits by holding up an ideal of self-effacing service.

From the perspective of Sophia, this is a partial and ambiguous restoration. Some aspects of the Divine Feminine—tenderness, protective love, the capacity to bear God into the world—are present in Marian devotion. Others—Wisdom's public teaching, the Spirit's disruptive freedom, the Great Mother's fierce defense of life—are muted or absent. Mary's elevation does not fully correct the patriarchal imbalance in the image of God; it provides a carefully circumscribed outlet that leaves the main structures intact.

6.4 Heresy hunts, witchcraft accusations, and fear of unruly feminine power

As Christian institutions grow in power and scope, their efforts to define and enforce orthodoxy intensify. Heresy becomes a central concern, and mechanisms for identifying, condemning, and suppressing deviant belief and practice spread. Within this larger story, the anxiety about unruly feminine power finds multiple targets.

Some early movements that give significant space to women's prophecy or leadership are branded heretical or suspect. Groups in which women speak in the assembly, perform ecstatic rituals, or claim visions that challenge established authority are often portrayed as chaotic, deceptive, or demonically influenced. The issue is not only theology in the narrow sense; it is the threat posed by forms of religious experience and organization that do not fit neatly into emerging clerical hierarchies.

Later, in the medieval and early modern periods, fear of feminine power takes more explicit forms in witchcraft accusations. Women—especially those on the margins of social and economic life—are charged with consorting with demons, casting spells, and subverting Christian order. Trials and executions become communal rituals in which anxieties about disease, crop failure, and social change are projected onto individual female bodies and then violently purged. The witch hunts are, among other things, a war against uncontrolled feminine agency: healers, midwives, widows, and outspoken women are disproportionately targeted.

Even when women are honored as mystics or saints, their experiences are subjected to scrutiny and control. Female mystics who receive visions and speak with authority must continually prove their obedience to male confessors and church officials. Their words are preserved if they can be framed as confirmations of existing doctrine or calls to deeper piety; if they challenge power structures too directly, they risk censure. The line between holy woman and heretic is

thin, and part of what determines on which side a woman falls is how her charisma relates to institutional authority.

In all these patterns, a consistent thread appears: fear of religious energy that is not easily domesticated by the male-led hierarchy, especially when that energy is carried by women or clothed in feminine symbolism. Unruly feminine power is associated with chaos, seduction, and rebellion; it must either be co-opted into safe forms (as with certain Marian devotions and carefully managed female mysticism) or expelled as demonic (as with witches and certain prophets).

Theologically, this fear reflects a deep unease with the very aspects of the Divine Feminine that this paper has identified as crucial mediators: embodied intuition, ecstatic connection, and a wisdom that does not always speak in the measured tones of official doctrine. Rather than being recognized as necessary correctives to hardening structures, these aspects are treated as threats. The resulting persecutions, whether of heretics or witches, are not simply episodes of social panic; they are expressions of a long-standing pattern in which the suppressed feminine returns in forms that terrify a patriarchal consciousness, which then responds with violence.

In this way, the tightening patriarchal frame of councils, fathers, and institutional enforcement not only suppresses the Divine Feminine but generates cycles of repression and backlash. Voices and practices that might have kept Christian imagination balanced—integrating Sophia with Logos, Spirit with Father, Mary with the broader community of women—are marginalized or attacked. The costs are measured not only in theological impoverishment but in blood: in the lives destroyed by inquisitions, witch hunts, and other sacralized forms of violence justified in the name of guarding the purity of the faith.

7. Beyond Israel: Goddess Cultures, Empire, and the Architecture of War

7.1 Gimbutas and Eisler on pre-Indo-European goddess and partnership cultures

When this paper speaks of the Divine Feminine as more than a Christian or Jewish concern, it steps into a wider, contested landscape of cultural prehistory. Two influential voices in that landscape are Marija Gimbutas and Riane Eisler. Their work is not beyond criticism, but it has helped many readers imagine how symbol systems centered on the feminine might relate to patterns of peace or violence.

Gimbutas reads the archaeological remains of “Old Europe” (Neolithic cultures in parts of southeastern and central Europe) as evidence for societies that were largely settled, agrarian, and symbolically organized around goddess figures. She emphasizes female figurines, bird and snake motifs, and images of birth, death, and regeneration carved into pottery, shrines, and

graves. For her, these signs point to cultures in which the life-giving and life-taking powers of nature were honored in relatively non-hierarchical, community-centered ways. Warfare, in her reconstruction, is minimal; fortifications and weapons are rare compared to later periods. She contrasts this with the arrival of Indo-European, horse-riding, warrior groups whose art, burial practices, and social structures highlight male gods of thunder and sky, strong hierarchy, and a pronounced warrior ethos.

Eisler translates this kind of archaeological and mythological reconstruction into a broader cultural theory of “partnership” versus “dominator” societies. Partnership cultures, in her terms, do not necessarily place women over men; rather, they balance feminine and masculine principles, emphasize care and mutuality, and keep hierarchies relatively shallow. The divine is often imaged in female or androgynous form, tied to cycles of nature and fertility. Dominator cultures, by contrast, rigidly rank men over women, elders over children, and elites over commoners. Their gods are overwhelmingly male, militarized, ruling from above; violence is sacralized as an instrument of order. In this story, the shift from goddess-centered partnership cultures to male-dominated dominator cultures marks the birth of institutionalized, large-scale warfare.

Whether or not every detail of these reconstructions is historically secure, they offer an important intuition: that the way a society imagines the sacred—maternal or paternal, immanent or distant, cyclical or linear—feeds into how it organizes power, gender, and violence. Gimbutas and Eisler thus provide a broad, civilizational backdrop to the more specific Jewish and Christian developments considered in this paper.

7.2 Patriarchal empires (Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman) as the wider frame around Israel and the early church

Israel does not arise in a vacuum. Its stories, laws, and prophetic visions develop in conversation and conflict with a succession of powerful empires: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman. These empires are unmistakably patriarchal and militarized. Kings claim divine sanction for conquest; elite men monopolize formal power; women’s status is tightly bound to male honor and lineage.

Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions celebrate kings as chosen by storm and war gods to extend their dominion. Reliefs show male rulers trampling enemies, leading armies, and presenting captives to their deities. The gods themselves are often pictured as armed, enthroned males presiding over a cosmic order maintained by force. Temples are not only religious centers but also hubs of economic and political control. The architecture of these empires—monumental palaces, walled cities, processional ways lined with lion and bull

figures—embodies a theology in stone: power descends from a male deity through a male ruler to male elites, and war is both tool and sacrament of that order.

Greek and Roman contexts continue and refine this pattern. Classical Greek city-states celebrate male citizen-warriors, while women's lives are largely confined to the household, with significant but constrained religious roles. The Olympian pantheon includes goddesses, but the primary symbols of sovereignty, reason, and the just ordering of the polis are male. Rome's imperial ideology centers on the fatherland, the emperor as *pater patriae*, and the legions as instruments of peace through victory. Even when female deities are honored—Athena, Hera, Artemis, Aphrodite, Cybele, Isis—their cults are often appropriated into a framework that remains structurally patriarchal, with ultimate control resting in male priesthoods and magistracies.

Israel's monotheism develops in tension with this environment. On the one hand, Israel shares many of the assumptions of its neighbors: God is frequently portrayed as a warrior, a king, a judge; patriarchal family structures are taken for granted. On the other hand, Israel's prophets also articulate a sharp critique of imperial violence and idolatry. They condemn trust in chariots and alliances, call for justice for widows and orphans, and envision a future where swords are beaten into plowshares. This prophetic strand shows that even within a patriarchal, militarized world, alternative imaginations of power and peace can arise.

The early Christian movement, emerging under Roman rule, inherits both sets of pressures. Its proclamation of a crucified and risen Lord subverts some imperial assumptions, yet its growing institutional life must navigate Roman expectations of order and respectability. In this context, the way Christians imagine God, gender, and authority is never merely an internal doctrinal matter. It is shaped by, and responds to, the architecture of empire.

7.3 Linking loss or marginalization of goddess imagery to institutionalized warfare at the civilizational scale

Across these various contexts, one can trace a broad pattern without idealizing any particular culture. In many early agrarian societies, goddess imagery is closely tied to the earth, fertility, and cyclical time. Rituals center on planting and harvest, birth and death, the turning of seasons. Power is experienced as something that rises and falls with natural rhythms; if there are conflicts, they are often localized and bounded by the needs of subsistence. The divine feminine is not necessarily gentle—goddesses can be fierce, stormy, and demanding—but her power is woven into the fabric of life, not abstracted into a distant throne.

As male warrior elites consolidate control—first in city-states, then in empires—the symbolic center of gravity shifts. Sky and storm gods who favor kings and armies rise in prominence. Mythic narratives celebrate heroic exploits, conquests, and the establishment of order through

the defeat of chaos monsters. The cyclical rhythms of nature do not disappear, but they are subordinated to linear stories of expansion, victory, and rule. The divine is increasingly imaged as a sovereign male overseeing a hierarchical cosmos.

In this shift, goddess imagery is either downgraded, assimilated, or weaponized. In some cases, female deities are reduced to consorts, mothers, or patrons of specific domestic or erotic domains, losing their former centrality. In others, they are assimilated into imperial cults as symbols of the empire's fecundity and beneficence, their power harnessed to legitimize male rule. In still others, particularly where monotheistic reform movements arise, they are demonized or expelled as idols, their cults suppressed as threats to proper worship. In each case, the free-standing, world-embedded feminine divine is constrained.

The correlation with warfare is not simply that goddess cultures are peaceful and god cultures violent; history is more complicated than that. Rather, the argument is that as the symbolic universe tilts decisively toward a transcendent, masculine, command-and-control image of the divine, it becomes easier to build institutions that mirror that image: centralized states, standing armies, rigid hierarchies, and ideologies that justify large-scale, organized violence as participation in a higher order. If ultimate reality is imagined as a sovereign male who rules by subduing enemies, then human rulers who do the same can see themselves as imitating the divine.

When goddess imagery is marginalized, the counterweight it might provide to this architecture is weakened. The aspects of the sacred that emphasize birth, nurture, reciprocity with the earth, and the value of small, local forms of life recede from official theology and public ritual. They may survive in folk practices, women's traditions, or suppressed cults, but they no longer shape the highest legitimations of power. The Divine Feminine, in this sense, is not merely one set of symbols among others; it is a potential check on the sacralization of domination. Its loss or confinement leaves a vacuum that militarized, patriarchal images of God readily fill.

7.4 How these long arcs resonate with Jungian and Christian narratives without romanticizing a non-patriarchal Judaism

It is tempting, when confronted with these large-scale stories, to divide history into a golden age and a fall: peaceful goddess cultures displaced by violent patriarchal empires; a gentle Sophia supplanted by a harsh Father. Jungian and Christian narratives can easily be conscripted into such a scheme, with the feminine archetype standing for integration and the masculine for rigid control. This paper rejects that simplification.

Judaism from its earliest layers is patriarchal in structure and language. Its scriptures contain both tender and violent images of God; its laws both protect and constrain women; its narratives mix deep compassion with episodes of divinely sanctioned warfare. There is no

pristine, non-patriarchal Israel to which one can simply return. Likewise, goddess-centered cultures are not automatically egalitarian or non-violent. They can be internally stratified, capable of cruelty, and implicated in systems of domination.

What Jung and Neumann offer, instead of nostalgia, is a way of reading these long arcs as movements within the collective psyche. The shift from earth-bound, cyclical goddess symbolism to sky-bound, linear, heroic god symbolism can be seen as a development of consciousness: humanity differentiating itself from nature, gaining autonomy, moral agency, and the capacity for reflection. The problem is not the emergence of masculine forms of the sacred as such, but their absolutization and the corresponding repression of the feminine.

Christianity, seen in this light, stands at a crossroads. On one side, it inherits the prophetic critique of empire and the Wisdom tradition of Sophia, both of which could anchor a balanced, non-violent image of God. On the other side, it grows within and eventually contributes to a world of patriarchal empires, male-dominated institutions, and militarized theologies. Jesus's ministry intensifies the inclusive, Sophia-like strands within Judaism without abolishing its monotheism; the early communities briefly embody a pattern of shared leadership and boundary-crossing love. The subsequent suppression of the Divine Feminine in doctrine and practice can thus be read as one more turn in a long civilizational spiral: the heroic, patriarchal ego fending off the very energies that could heal it.

By placing Gimbutas and Eisler alongside Jung, Neumann, and the biblical materials, this paper is not claiming that their reconstructions of prehistory are historically definitive. It is using them as heuristic myths—large-scale images that make visible the structural links between how the sacred is imagined and how power and violence are organized. In that frame, the Jewish and Christian stories are neither uniquely guilty nor uniquely innocent. They are particular instances of a broader human struggle to hold together transcendence and immanence, law and mercy, Logos and Sophia, in ways that honor life rather than crush it.

To say that suppression of the Divine Feminine is a principal driver of violence and war is, in this context, to say that every time a culture chooses a purely masculine, top-down, conquest-shaped image of God, it aligns itself with one pole of a very old tension. The goddess cultures and empires of antiquity show different configurations of that tension; the history of Israel and the church shows still others. The task now is not to romanticize any past, but to learn from these patterns and to seek a form of faith in which the forgotten half of God is no longer forced to return through catastrophe.

8. Violence as Sacralized Domination: Theological Mechanics

8.1 From relational God to omnipotent patriarch: reimagining power

In the most ancient stratum of Israel's faith, God is encountered in stories of relation: walking in the garden in the cool of the day, wrestling through the night with Jacob, bargaining with Abraham over Sodom, grieving over Israel's unfaithfulness like a wounded spouse or a parent with a wayward child. Power, in these narratives, is real but relational. God is not a distant unmoved mover but one who is drawn into dialogue, who risks love, who can be argued with and "moved" by intercession.

As theological reflection develops, especially under the pressure of philosophy and imperial politics, this relational God is increasingly described in terms of abstract attributes: omnipotence, omniscience, immutability, impassibility. These terms are not evil in themselves; they are attempts to safeguard the transcendence and faithfulness of God. Yet they also shift the focus. God becomes, in the imagination of many, above all an absolute will whose power has no real limits, whose knowledge is total, whose being cannot be affected by anything creaturely.

In a patriarchal world, this abstraction fuses easily with the figure of the omnipotent patriarch: the idealized father whose authority is unquestionable, whose word is law, whose approval or disapproval determines one's fate. The tenderness, vulnerability, and mutuality present in earlier images recede into the background. What remains at the center is sovereignty.

Once this fusion has taken place, power is no longer primarily the capacity to sustain relationships and heal what is broken. It becomes the capacity to command and enforce, to reward obedience and punish disobedience. Divine power is imagined along the same lines as imperial power, only infinitely magnified. The relational God has not disappeared; traces remain in prayers, parables, and mystical writings. But the operative, public image that shapes institutions and politics tilts toward the omnipotent patriarch—and with it, the notion that the highest and holiest form of power is the ability to bend others to one's will.

8.2 Atonement, sacrifice, and the masculinization of holiness

Nowhere is this shift more evident than in atonement theology. The New Testament presents the death of Jesus through multiple lenses: as a self-giving act of love, as a victory over the powers of evil, as the faithful witness of a righteous sufferer, as the breaking open of solidarity with sinners. Early Christian communities experienced the cross as the place where God enters into human suffering and transforms it from within.

Over time, however, one strand of interpretation becomes dominant: the idea that the primary problem to be solved is God's offended honor or violated justice, and that the primary function

of the cross is to satisfy this demand through a compensatory act of suffering. In such models, holiness is construed less as radiant, life-giving presence and more as a moral purity that must be maintained by strict equivalences of guilt and punishment. The Father, in this picture, cannot simply forgive; a debt must be paid, a penalty borne, a wrath appeased.

This masculinizes holiness in a specific way. Holiness becomes associated with ideals often coded as masculine in patriarchal cultures: strict justice, firmness, inflexible adherence to law, willingness to punish. “Soft” qualities—mercy, nurture, patient accompaniment—are acknowledged, but they are seen as potentially dangerous if not balanced by the hard edge of retribution. The cross is then interpreted primarily as a transaction within the masculine sphere of law and honor between Father and Son, rather than as the overflowing of a love that includes traditionally feminine traits of compassion and self-emptying care.

The Divine Feminine, in this context, is not given full voice in atonement. Sophia’s healing wisdom, the Spirit’s consoling presence, the maternal image of a God who would rather absorb harm than inflict it—all of these are overshadowed by the near-legal drama of satisfaction. Holiness is detached from the textures of daily life and embodied care and relocated in an abstract courtroom. Once that happens, it is not difficult to justify harshness, punishment, and even violence in the name of maintaining “holiness” at the social level.

8.3 How suppressed feminine values shape justifications for war and conquest

When power is imagined as unilateral control and holiness as purity guarded by force, the move from theology to warfare is not a long one. If God is primarily an omnipotent patriarch who maintains order by reward and punishment, then rulers who wage war to preserve or extend order can see themselves as participating in the divine pattern. Conquest can be framed as the execution of God’s will; defeat of enemies, as the vindication of righteousness.

In such a framework, values often associated with the Divine Feminine—empathy, attentiveness to the vulnerable, reluctance to spill blood, sensitivity to the web of relationships disrupted by violence—are easily dismissed as weaknesses. They are spiritualized into the private realm (appropriate for personal piety or women’s behavior) but not allowed to shape public ethics. Calls for mercy, reconciliation, or nonviolence can be heard as sentimental or naïve, especially when they come from those who have less access to institutional power.

Historically, this dynamic surfaces in multiple forms. Holy wars and crusades are justified as defense of God’s honor or the protection of sacred spaces. Colonization is narrated as bringing the light of the gospel and “civilization” to benighted peoples, even as their lands are seized and their cultures dismantled. State violence is sanctified in prayers and liturgies that ask divine blessing on armies and weapons. Throughout, the underlying logic remains: the God of masculine holiness is on the side of those who uphold his order by force.

The suppressed feminine appears here as the silenced objection: the voices saying that every enemy has a mother, that every battlefield is also a place where fields and streams are destroyed, that conquest leaves behind widows, orphans, and trauma that lasts generations. When the Divine Feminine is exiled from the image of God, these concerns have little theological weight. Peace becomes merely the interval between wars or the reward for victory, not a fundamental expression of God's character that should shape every aspect of collective life.

8.4 Ecological violence: earth as object once the Mother is dethroned

The logic of sacralized domination does not stop at human enemies. It extends to the earth itself. When images of the earth as mother, of nature as alive and suffused with divine presence, are demoted to superstition or romanticism, a crucial restraint on exploitation is removed. The world becomes an object—resource, raw material, backdrop for human drama.

Within such a worldview, the biblical mandate to “have dominion” and “subdue” the earth is easily read through patriarchal lenses: sovereignty means extraction, control, and transformation according to human purposes. Technological mastery is seen as unambiguously good; the suffering of ecosystems is, at best, a secondary concern. Economic growth and national strength are framed as blessings, even when they depend on practices that degrade soil, water, air, and the habitats of other creatures.

If the Divine Feminine were fully present in the theological imagination, this trajectory would be harder to justify. Sophia's delight in the inhabited world, the Great Mother's association with fertility and cycles, Marian imagery of a human body bearing God—all of these would continually remind the faithful that creation is not inert stuff but a matrix of relationships that sustains life. Ecological harm would be felt as a wound to something holy, not simply as collateral damage in the pursuit of prosperity or security.

By dethroning the Mother in religious symbolism, modern industrial societies have given themselves permission to treat the earth as a neutral stage on which the drama of salvation and progress takes place, rather than as a participant in that drama. The result is a pattern of ecological violence that mirrors the pattern of military violence: domination justified as necessary, destruction rationalized by appeals to higher goods, warnings from the margins ignored until crises become unavoidable.

In this sense, the suppression of the Divine Feminine contributes not only to wars between nations but to a quiet, pervasive war against the conditions of life themselves. The same theological mechanics—omniscient patriarchal power, masculinized holiness, denigrated relationality—underwrite both. To recover a more balanced image of God is therefore not a matter of aesthetic preference. It is a matter of moral and ecological survival.

9. Restoring Sophia: Possibilities and Risks

9.1 Feminist theology's retrieval of the feminine face of God

Any serious attempt to restore Sophia in Christian imagination stands on the shoulders of feminist theologians who have been doing precisely this work for decades. Their core insight is simple but far-reaching: if women are created in the image of God, and if human beings together reflect that image, then an exclusively masculine symbolism for God distorts both theology and anthropology. It erases half of humanity from the mirror of the divine and, in doing so, sanctifies structures that subordinate women.

The retrieval of the feminine face of God takes several forms. One is a return to neglected biblical imagery: God as a mother in labor, as a nursing woman, as a hen gathering her chicks, as the one who gives birth to Israel and consoles her children. Another is a renewed attention to the Wisdom tradition, where Sophia is a radiant, active, feminine figure who participates in creation, instructs humanity, and delights in the world. Feminist theologians highlight these texts not as curiosities but as central witnesses to who God is.

Beyond exegesis, there is constructive work. Some theologians speak explicitly of God as both Father and Mother, or as beyond gender yet genuinely imaged in both women and men. Others develop Sophia-Christology, exploring how the figure of divine Wisdom can deepen understanding of Christ's person and work. Still others experiment liturgically, incorporating feminine titles and metaphors into prayer, song, and sacrament so that congregations learn to address God in more than one grammatical gender.

This retrieval is not simply about making women feel included. It challenges the underlying structures that have bound holiness to masculine-coded traits like dominance, abstraction, and disembodied purity. When God is praised as Wise Mother, as midwife of creation, as friend and sister, as well as Father and Lord, the symbolic field shifts. Mercy is not an exception in a regime of strict justice; it is seen as intrinsic to divine life. Embodiment and relationality are not tolerated weaknesses; they are honored as places where God chooses to dwell.

At the same time, feminist theology insists that the point is not to trade one exclusion for another. The goal is not to feminize God in a way that erases masculine imagery, but to recognize that all speech about God is analogical and partial. Restoring Sophia means letting long-suppressed metaphors breathe again, not canonizing one more narrow image.

9.2 Depth-psychological integration: anima, body, and Spirit

On the psychological side, restoring Sophia requires more than new words. It calls for an integration of the inner feminine in both women and men. In Jungian terms, this means

acknowledging and relating to the anima: that complex of qualities and images that connect ego-consciousness to the unconscious, to feeling, to the body, and to relational life.

For men, this often involves confronting the ways in which they have learned to distrust feeling, vulnerability, and dependence. The anima has been projected outward onto women, who are then alternately idealized as saviors and despised as temptresses. Integrating the anima means recognizing that the sources of creativity, compassion, and intuition attributed to “mysterious women” are in fact also within the male psyche, and that disowning them fuels alienation and aggression. It may show up as learning to listen rather than solve, to inhabit the body rather than escape into the head, to allow grief and tenderness to surface without shame.

For women, the integration of the inner masculine (animus) is also necessary, but in a culture that has already overvalued masculine modes of being, the reclamation of the feminine tends to be more urgent. Many women have internalized patriarchal messages that devalue their bodies, silence their voices, and treat their spiritual experiences as suspect. For them, restoring Sophia can mean reclaiming their own authority as knowers of God, trusting their experience of Spirit in daily life, and refusing to separate their spirituality from their embodied realities.

In both cases, the body is central. A theology that speaks of Sophia while continuing to treat bodies as obstacles to holiness will not heal the split. Depth-psychological work recognizes that unprocessed trauma, habitual dissociation, and inherited shame around sexuality all interfere with the capacity to experience God as present in the flesh. Practices that reconnect people gently with their own bodies—through contemplative prayer, movement, breath, and honest conversation—are therefore part of restoring the Divine Feminine, because they allow the psyche to feel again the connection between Spirit and matter.

At the collective level, the church can support this integration by making space for lament, for non-instrumental beauty, for silence, for prayer that is not always word-driven or hierarchical. The Spirit, in this register, is not just the guarantor of doctrine or the giver of spectacular gifts; the Spirit is the subtle, pervasive presence that binds people together in webs of empathy and sustains them through the slow work of transformation. To restore Sophia is to let Spirit be felt again as breath, as warmth, as shared life—forms in which the feminine archetype naturally resonates.

9.3 Political and ecclesial implications: authority, leadership, and liturgy

If Sophia is restored only in interior experience and poetic language, her impact will be limited. The patterns of domination that this paper has traced are embodied in structures of authority, leadership, and liturgy. To address violence and war at their roots, those structures must be examined in the light of a rebalanced image of God.

In political life, a Sophia-informed imagination questions the assumption that effective leadership must mirror the model of the omnipotent patriarch: decisive, distant, and controlling. It lifts up forms of leadership that are collaborative, listening, and oriented toward sustaining relationships rather than merely winning contests of power. Policy questions are viewed not only through the lens of national interest and security, but through the lens of how they affect the most vulnerable, how they reshape the web of life, how they reverberate in the long term. Feminine-coded values like care, interdependence, and attentiveness cease to be relegated to “soft” domains and are recognized as central to wise governance.

In ecclesial life, this means revisiting who is allowed to speak, preside, and decide. If the Spirit’s gifts are poured out on all flesh, then women’s exclusion from ordained ministry, preaching, or governance is hard to justify, especially in churches that affirm the full equality of women in other respects. Restoring Sophia implies that the church’s structures should reflect the diversity of the body of Christ, with women and men sharing responsibility at every level, not as tokens but as equal partners. It also implies that styles of leadership that mimic secular patriarchal models—authoritarian pastors, unaccountable hierarchies—are spiritually unhealthy.

Liturgy is a powerful site of transformation. The words, images, and gestures that are repeated week after week shape the unconscious of a community. Incorporating feminine images of God into prayers and hymns, naming women from scripture and history who embodied Sophia’s wisdom, creating rituals that honor cycles of birth, death, and renewal in human and ecological life—all of this helps rewire the theological imagination. Even small changes, such as occasionally addressing God as “Mother” or “Wisdom” alongside “Father” and “Lord,” can have a deep cumulative effect if done thoughtfully.

The risks here are real. Some fear that such changes will alienate those formed in more traditional patterns, or that they will dilute core doctrines. Others worry that new forms of inclusion will be superficial, leaving underlying power structures untouched. The challenge is to move beyond token gestures to genuine reconfiguration, without severing the continuity of faith. That requires patience, discernment, and a willingness to let conflict surface rather than suppress it—a willingness that itself is part of breaking with sacralized domination.

9.4 Avoiding new idolatries: not a reversal of dominance, but a rebalancing

Finally, any program of restoring Sophia must guard against creating a new idol. The history of the church shows how easily living symbols harden into rigid images that exclude as much as they reveal. If the problem with the patriarchal frame is that it absolutizes one set of metaphors and traits, the solution cannot simply be to absolutize their opposites.

One form this new idolatry might take is a romantic glorification of the feminine: imagining women as inherently peaceful, nurturing, and wise, and men as inherently violent and obtuse.

This essentialism not only falsifies reality—women are capable of cruelty, men of tenderness—but it also traps individuals in roles dictated by archetype rather than by vocation and character. It would repeat the old mistake in a new key, turning gender symbolism into destiny rather than language for aspects of a shared human calling.

Another danger is the construction of an oppositional “goddess” as a rival to the Christian God. While goddess imagery can be a powerful corrective in contexts where the divine has been exclusively masculinized, a simplistic replacement of Father with Mother risks leaving the underlying structure of domination intact. The figure on the throne changes gender, but the throne itself—the idea of sacred power as unilateral control—remains unchallenged. The result is a reversal, not a transformation.

A more subtle form of idolatry is aesthetic: treating Sophia as an attractive spiritual brand, a way to make faith feel more poetic or inclusive, while leaving economic, political, and ecological realities untouched. In this scenario, the Divine Feminine becomes a theme for retreats and artwork, but not a force that reorders budgets, foreign policies, or church constitutions. She is admired but not obeyed.

To avoid these traps, restoring Sophia must be understood as rebalancing within a fundamentally relational, Trinitarian, and incarnational framework. God is beyond gender yet truly mirrored in gendered human beings. The point is not to decide whether God is more like a father or a mother, more like a king or a midwife, but to let the full range of scriptural and experiential metaphors correct and complete one another. Logos and Sophia, justice and mercy, transcendence and immanence, strength and vulnerability—all are held together in the mystery of the divine life.

Practically, this means maintaining a posture of self-critique. Communities that embrace Sophia must remain alert to their own shadow: to the ways in which they might exclude those who do not speak their language, to the temptations of moral superiority, to the possibility that new forms of spiritual fashion will displace older, quieter forms of faithfulness. It also means grounding symbolic change in concrete practices of nonviolence, shared leadership, ecological care, and solidarity with the marginalized. When the Divine Feminine is restored in that way—rooted in Christ’s self-giving love, animated by the Spirit, oriented toward the flourishing of all creation—the risk of new idolatries is reduced.

The aim, in the end, is not a church or world in which the feminine dominates the masculine, but a community of persons and peoples in which the forgotten half of the sacred image is finally welcomed home. In such a setting, the patterns of sacralized domination that have fueled violence and war lose some of their theological oxygen. Power can be imagined again as the

capacity to give life rather than to take it, and holiness as a fire that warms and heals rather than burns and destroys.

10. Objections, Alternatives, and Hard Questions

10.1 Is “Divine Feminine” too vague or essentialist?

One of the most immediate objections to this paper’s language is that “Divine Feminine” risks being either so vague that it means everything and nothing, or so essentialist that it pins complex realities onto simplistic gender binaries. Critics rightly ask what, precisely, is being claimed when terms like Sophia, anima, or Great Mother are invoked. Are we describing an objective aspect of God, a set of human projections, an archetype in the psyche, or a sociological pattern in cultures?

Part of the answer is methodological humility. “Divine Feminine” is used here as a heuristic phrase: it gathers a family of images, practices, and experiences that recur across traditions—maternal metaphors for God, female figures of Wisdom, earth-centered sacrality, and embodied, relational forms of holiness. The term is admittedly broad. Its usefulness lies not in naming a sharply bounded entity, but in revealing patterns that might otherwise be missed when one only speaks of “women’s issues,” “patriarchy,” or “gender roles” in isolation from theology and psychology.

The charge of essentialism cuts deeper. If one speaks carelessly, it is easy to slide from saying “cultures have often coded relational, nurturing, and world-affirming qualities as feminine” to saying “women are naturally relational, nurturing, and world-affirming, while men are naturally rational, dominant, and abstract.” This paper explicitly rejects that slide. Archetypal language is descriptive of symbolic patterns, not prescriptive of human destiny. Both so-called feminine and masculine qualities live in every person, and their distribution across actual men and women is highly variable.

The danger, then, is not in using gendered symbolism, but in forgetting that it is symbolism and allowing it to harden into fixed stereotypes. To mitigate this, the argument repeatedly emphasizes that the problem lies not in masculine imagery as such, but in its absolutization and the corresponding repression of feminine imagery. The goal is not to define a “true feminine essence,” but to restore a set of neglected metaphors and psychic functions to the conversation about God, power, and violence.

10.2 Historical caution: patriarchy before, during, and after Jesus

Another major objection challenges any narrative that appears to romantically single out Jesus and the earliest Christian communities as a brief oasis of egalitarian harmony between

patriarchal ages. Historically, patriarchy is deeply entrenched long before Jesus and persists long after. Israel's scriptures, Second Temple Judaism, and the Greco-Roman world all assume male dominance in household, cult, and public life. The early church, despite its moments of inclusion, remains embedded in these structures.

This objection is essential for intellectual honesty. It prevents the story from collapsing into a simplistic drama of pure beginnings and corruptions. Jesus does not inaugurate a perfectly non-patriarchal society; he disturbs, complicates, and reconfigures existing patterns, but he does so from within them. Women are given unprecedented roles as disciples, patrons, and witnesses, yet there are no manifestos abolishing patriarchal family structures. The earliest communities experiment with shared leadership that includes women, yet they also produce household codes that reinscribe conventional hierarchies.

The language of “neutralizing” Christ's work must therefore be heard carefully. It does not mean that there was once a fully realized, gender-just church that later betrayed itself. It means that in the tangle of continuities and discontinuities that marked Christian origins, certain liberating trajectories—especially those that foregrounded women and the feminine face of God—were gradually sidelined, while more conventional, patriarchal trajectories were elevated into norms and dogmas.

Historical caution also demands recognition that some of what later appears as regression may have been experienced at the time as prudent adaptation or even as progress. For example, in some contexts, formalizing office and doctrine helped protect communities from charismatic abuses that could harm women as well as men. The indictment here is not that every move away from charismatic spontaneity was bad, but that the cumulative effect of many such moves, under patriarchal assumptions, narrowed the space in which Sophia-like patterns could thrive.

10.3 Are war and violence really rooted in gendered archetypes?

A third objection targets the heart of the thesis: even if one grants that the Divine Feminine has been suppressed, is it plausible to claim that this is a principal driver of violence and war? Armed conflicts have obvious material causes—competition for land, resources, and power; fear of invasion; economic interests; ideological disputes. To attribute them to archetypal imbalances risks psychologizing what are fundamentally political and economic realities.

The response here is not to deny those material factors but to situate them within a larger symbolic and psychic ecology. Wars are fought by human beings embedded in cultures that tell them what counts as honorable, necessary, or inevitable. Those cultures are shaped by their images of power, order, and the sacred. When the dominant image of ultimate reality is that of an omnipotent patriarch who establishes order by subduing enemies, it becomes easier to

justify state violence as participation in that order. When holiness is imagined as purity that must be defended against contamination, it becomes easier to sacralize the extermination or expulsion of “impure” others.

Gendered archetypes enter at the level of these legitimating narratives. The suppression of the Divine Feminine does not cause war in the way a spark causes a fire; it creates a symbolic environment in which resorting to war appears more natural, more moral, and more spiritually endorsed. It dampens sensitivity to suffering, marginalizes relational and conciliatory responses, and narrows the imagination of what counts as strength. In other words, archetypal configurations modulate how material conflicts are perceived and responded to.

There is also a feedback loop. Repeated recourse to war reinforces masculine-coded ideals of toughness, control, and willingness to inflict pain, while discrediting feminine-coded ideals of care and vulnerability as impractical. Over time, societies that fight often may internalize a habitus in which the Divine Feminine seems increasingly alien. The thesis of this paper, then, is not that gendered archetypes are the only or direct cause of violence, but that they are a deep, often overlooked layer in the architecture that makes violence thinkable, justifiable, and repeatable.

10.4 Dialogue with other traditions: Judaism, Islam, and non-Christian paths

Finally, any Christian-framed argument about the Divine Feminine must be tested and enriched in dialogue with other traditions. Judaism and Islam, in particular, share roots and conceptual overlap with Christianity while also offering distinct ways of imagining God, law, and gender. Non-Abrahamic paths add further variety, from explicitly goddess-centered religions to philosophies that resist gendered language for the ultimate altogether.

In Jewish thought, there are long-standing resources for speaking of a feminine aspect or presence of God, as well as strong currents of resistance to such language. Discussions of wisdom, indwelling presence, and the Sabbath as bride show how a deeply monotheistic tradition can find ways to honor relational, nurturing, and world-affirming dimensions of the divine without fragmenting God into male and female deities. At the same time, Jewish law and practice have often maintained strict gender roles, and contemporary Jewish feminists have had to struggle with many of the same patterns of patriarchal exclusion that Christian feminists face.

In Islam, the insistence on God’s absolute oneness and transcendence makes gendered language especially delicate. God is beyond male and female, and the primary names emphasize mercy, compassion, and sovereignty in ways that do not map neatly onto Western gender codes. Yet there, too, the predominance of masculine pronouns in many languages, the centrality of male imagery in popular devotion, and the legal positioning of women have raised questions similar to those examined in this paper. Muslim thinkers who explore the womb-like

resonances of divine mercy, the significance of female figures in scripture and history, and the spiritual authority of women's experience contribute important perspectives to any conversation about the Divine Feminine.

Non-Christian and non-Abrahamic traditions complicate the picture further. Some explicitly worship goddesses alongside gods; others intend a non-dual or impersonal ultimate that transcends all gender. Their histories show that a strong presence of feminine divinity does not automatically produce just societies, nor does its absence always entail violence. Yet they also demonstrate alternative symbol systems in which cycles of birth, death, and regeneration, or qualities like compassion and wisdom, are centrally honored. These can both challenge and complement Christian attempts to restore Sophia.

Engaging these traditions prevents Christian discourse from imagining that it owns either the problem or the solution. It also raises hard questions about universality. Are the linkages between suppressed feminine imagery and violence proposed here specific to the Christian-Western trajectory, or do they point to more general dynamics in how human beings sacralize power? A truly rigorous account would require comparative work beyond the scope of this paper. What can be said, at least, is that the Christian story of Jesus, Sophia, and the church's patriarchal turn is one particular theater in which a broader human drama plays out: the struggle to hold together transcendence and immanence, law and mercy, strength and tenderness, without sacrificing any to the illusion of a safe, one-sided God.

11. Conclusion: Peace as the Return of the Forgotten Half

11.1 Recapping the argument from psyche to church to geopolitics

This paper has traced a single thread through multiple layers of human life: from the inner architecture of the psyche, through the formation of Christian doctrine and practice, into the structures of society, war, and ecological devastation. The thread is the presence—and absence—of the Divine Feminine.

At the psychological level, Jung and Neumann describe a culture that has over-identified with a one-sided Logos: rational, controlling, vertical, and disembodied. The feminine archetype—anima, Great Mother, Sophia—is pushed into the shadow, depriving consciousness of a mediator between ego and unconscious, spirit and body, human and earth. The result is a brittle heroic ego that is technically powerful but relationally impoverished, prone to projection and collective eruptions of violence.

At the theological and ecclesial level, the same pattern appears in a different register. The biblical figure of Wisdom, the maternal metaphors for God, and the inclusive practice of Jesus

surface a feminine face of the divine. Early communities, with their women patrons, prophets, and leaders, briefly live into that possibility. But under the combined pressures of Greco-Roman respectability, Jewish–Gentile tensions, canon formation, and dogmatic consolidation, a tightening patriarchal frame emerges. The Trinity is named almost exclusively in masculine terms; women are gradually pushed out of leadership; Mary is exalted yet domesticated as a safe, obedient feminine ideal; unruly feminine power is feared, controlled, or persecuted.

At the geopolitical and ecological level, these symbolic and institutional developments feed into broader architectures of domination. Empires that worship transcendent, militarized male deities build standing armies and justify conquest as participation in divine order. Atonement models that foreground a Father’s offended honor or violated law align holiness with punitive power, making harshness in the name of righteousness easier to sanctify. The dethroning of the Mother in religious imagination licenses a view of the earth as mere resource, opening the way for an unrestrained war against the conditions of life.

Across these layers, the argument has been that the suppression of the Divine Feminine is not an ornamentally unfortunate feature of Christian history. It is a load-bearing distortion that has shaped how power is imagined, how holiness is defined, how conflict is interpreted, and how violence is justified.

11.2 The claim restated: how suppressing the Divine Feminine neutralizes Christ’s work

Within this frame, the central claim can now be restated more precisely. The suppression of the Divine Feminine has neutralized crucial aspects of Christ’s work by cutting off, or diluting, the channels through which that work was meant to continue in the life of the church and the world.

Jesus’s ministry embodies Sophia-like traits: public teaching that invites rather than coerces, boundary-crossing compassion that touches the impure, table fellowship that reconfigures honor, and a pattern of relation that refuses to treat women as secondary or invisible. His authority is not the brittle power of the omnipotent patriarch; it is the authority of One who washes feet, who heals, who forgives without demanding repayment, who absorbs violence rather than returning it. In him, the divine life appears as a union of justice and mercy, transcendence and intimacy, Logos and Sophia.

When the Divine Feminine is pushed to the margins—when God is officially imagined almost exclusively as Father and Lord, when masculine traits of control and abstraction dominate the theology of holiness, when women’s bodies and voices are constrained, and when Sophia is displaced from the center of doctrine to the periphery of devotion—the continuity between Jesus’s pattern and the church’s practice is weakened. The church may still proclaim Christ, but it does so in a register that often contradicts the shape of his life. His way of non-dominating

power becomes incomprehensible within a symbolic system that equates authority with unilateral control. His refusal to sacralize violence becomes harder to recognize when holiness is understood primarily as purity guarded by punishment.

In this sense, suppression of the Divine Feminine “neutralizes” Christ’s work not by erasing it outright, but by enclosing it within structures that blunt its transformative edge. The language of grace remains, but it is fitted into juridical schemes that leave sacralized domination untouched. The memory of women at the heart of the gospel remains, but it is enclosed within institutions that deny women analogous roles. The Wisdom that delighted in the inhabited world remains in scripture, but it is overshadowed by images of a God who stands at a greater distance from the earth. The result is a Christianity that can preach love yet bless wars, honor Mary yet silence women, admire Jesus yet organize itself around very different models of power.

11.3 War, violence, and the unfinished task of spiritual integration

Recognizing this dynamic does not magically end wars or dismantle oppressive systems. It does, however, clarify part of the unfinished task facing any community that names Jesus as Lord and longs for peace. That task is spiritual integration: bringing the repressed half of the sacred image back into conscious relationship with the other half, so that both psyche and church can act less compulsively and more truthfully.

At the level of individual formation, this means learning to integrate feelings, bodies, and relationships into spiritual life rather than treating them as obstacles. It means men and women alike confronting their inner splits: the fear of vulnerability that masquerades as strength, the contempt for care that masquerades as maturity, the suspicion of beauty and pleasure that masquerades as holiness. Without this work, pious language about peace remains shallow; the unacknowledged shadow continues to seek outlets, including in political and ecclesial conflicts.

At the level of doctrine and liturgy, integration means allowing suppressed metaphors and figures—Sophia, maternal images of God, the Spirit as comforter and midwife—to return to the center of speech about God. It means letting them not only console, but critique: to question atonement schemes that over-identify God with retribution, to challenge leadership models that confuse domination with shepherding, to reorient sacraments toward healing and hospitality rather than boundary-policing alone.

At the level of social and political engagement, integration means that Christian ethics cannot be satisfied with “less violent” versions of the same old patterns. If the root problem includes a sacralization of domination, then genuine peace requires new ways of organizing power: more participatory, more responsive to the vulnerable, more willing to accept limits on control. This extends to economics and ecology. A church that has rediscovered the Divine Feminine cannot

treat endless extraction and growth as unquestioned goods; it will feel, in its spiritual nervous system, the violence being done to the web of life.

The task is unfinished because integration is not a single reform or doctrinal adjustment. It is an ongoing process of conversion—personal, communal, and structural. It involves conflict, as deeply held identities and privileges are questioned. It also involves joy, as new experiences of God's presence break through where only absence or rigidity had been felt. The thesis of this paper has been that, without such integration, efforts toward peace will be continually undercut by a symbolic economy that still rewards domination. With it, the spiritual conditions for more durable forms of peace become at least imaginable.

11.4 A closing image: Sophia standing where swords are beaten into plowshares

The prophetic vision of swords beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks has haunted the Christian imagination for centuries. It pictures a world in which the instruments of death are transformed into tools of cultivation, where nations no longer train for war, and where fear no longer drives the architecture of life. In the context of this paper, one might allow that scene to be populated more densely.

Imagine that place of transformation not as an empty field in which metal is bent by impersonal forces, but as a workshop where a figure stands who has too often been missing from our images: Sophia. She is not a rival to the Father or the Son, but the Wisdom through whom all things were made and in whom all things hold together. Her presence is not ornamental. She is the one who understands, from within, the inner chemistry of violence and the slow craft of peace.

Around her are those whom the old order considered marginal: women who have known both childbirth and the loss of children to war, men who have laid down weapons and discovered the terror and gift of vulnerability, communities that have suffered ecological devastation and have chosen restoration over revenge. The tools on the ground bear the scars of their former use—nicks and stains that do not disappear when the metal is reshaped. Sophia does not erase those marks; she incorporates them. The plowshares remember that they were once swords, just as resurrected bodies still bear wounds. Peace, in this vision, is not forgetfulness; it is transfiguration.

In such a scene, the Divine Feminine is no longer suppressed or confined to private sentiment. She is present at the very point where history turns from domination to shared cultivation. Her wisdom holds together what patriarchal consciousness split apart: strength and tenderness, justice and mercy, transcendence and intimacy, humanity and earth. Those who learn from her do not become soft in the sense of evasive; they become soft in the sense of permeable, able to be moved by the suffering of others and by the call of God.

If peace is, in part, the return of the forgotten half of God, then the work ahead is both daring and modest. Daring, because it asks individuals and institutions to loosen their grip on images of power that have felt sacred for millennia. Modest, because it begins in innumerable small acts: changing words in a prayer, giving the pulpit to a silenced voice, choosing reconciliation over retaliation in a specific conflict, caring for a patch of wounded earth. In each of those acts, Sophia steps a little more fully into the circle, and the possibility grows that one day, the tools of war will be as unthinkable as theologies that bless them.

12. References

This section gathers key works that underlie the argument of the paper, grouped into four overlapping clusters: depth psychology and Jungian studies, feminist theology and early Christian historiography, ecofeminism and goddess studies, and political theology and violence studies. The list is selective rather than exhaustive and is meant as a starting point for further reading.

12.1 Depth psychology and Jungian sources

Jung and Neumann provide much of the conceptual apparatus for talking about archetypal “feminine” and its repression in individuals and cultures.

- Jung, C. G. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Collected Works, Vol. 9, Part 1. Princeton University Press. Foundational essays on archetypal patterns, including maternal and anima figures, and their role in the personal and collective unconscious. [Internet Archive](#)
- Jung, C. G. *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*. Collected Works, Vol. 9, Part 2. Princeton University Press. Explores the archetype of the Self, shadow, and the Christ-symbol, crucial for linking inner integration with historical religion. [Jungian Center](#)
- Jung, C. G. *Answer to Job*. Princeton University Press. A provocative, mythic-psychological reading of the Book of Job in which divine transformation and the figure of Sophia emerge as central themes. [CDN Impuls](#)
- Jung, C. G. *Four Archetypes*. Routledge. A short volume elaborating the mother, rebirth, spirit, and trickster archetypes; helpful for clarifying the difference between “mother” as symbol and literal motherhood. [Jungian Center](#)
- Neumann, E. *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. Princeton University Press. A major synthesis on the evolution of consciousness, from Great Mother symbolism through patriarchal hero myths, framing patriarchy as a psychological stage rather than a final norm. ia800705.us.archive.org
- Neumann, E. *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*. Princeton University Press. The classic study of the Great Mother archetype in myth and religion, tracing its creative and destructive poles and its repression in patriarchal cultures. [JSTOR](#)

These texts together ground the claim that systematic repression of the feminine side of the divine and of the psyche generates shadow dynamics that can erupt in collective violence.

12.2 Feminist theology and early Christian historiography

Feminist theologians and historians of early Christianity supply the critical tools for re-reading Scripture and tradition with the Divine Feminine and women's agency brought back into view.

- Schüssler Fiorenza, E. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. Crossroad. A landmark reconstruction of early Christian communities that restores women's leadership and exposes how later memory marginalized them. [Internet Archive](#)
- Ruether, R. R. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Beacon Press. A systematic feminist theology that critiques androcentric God-images and develops more inclusive, liberating symbols for God, humanity, and creation. [Internet Archive](#)
- Johnson, E. A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. Crossroad. Develops a trinitarian feminist theology that retrieves female and Wisdom/Sophia imagery as orthodox, not marginal, ways of naming the Christian God. [Internet Archive](#)
- McFague, S. *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. Fortress Press. Analyzes metaphor and model in God-talk, proposing relational and ecological images (Mother, Lover, Friend) as alternatives to patriarchal monarchic models. [Internet Archive](#)
- Daly, M. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Beacon Press. A radical philosophical-theological critique arguing that patriarchal God-language underwrites women's oppression and needs to be fundamentally reimagined. [Internet Archive](#)
- Torjesen, K. J. *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*. HarperCollins. Documents epigraphic and literary evidence for women as bishops, presbyters, and community leaders, and narrates their later exclusion. [Breaking Down Patriarchy](#)
- Brooten, B. *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues*. Fortress Press. Analyzes inscriptional evidence for women holding formal leadership titles in ancient synagogues, complicating assumptions about Jewish and early Christian patriarchy. [JSTOR](#)
- Cohick, L. H. *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*. Baker Academic. A social-historical study of women's lives and status in the first-century Mediterranean, providing context for the Gospels and Pauline letters. [Breaking Down Patriarchy](#)

Together, these works support the claim that Jesus's inclusive practice and early Christian women's leadership were historically real, and that subsequent patriarchal consolidation involved a genuine "neutralizing" of that trajectory.

12.3 Ecofeminism, goddess studies, and archaeomythology

Ecofeminist and goddess-oriented scholarship connects gender, violence, and our relation to the earth, and revisits pre- and non-patriarchal symbol systems.

- Gimbutas, M. *The Language of the Goddess: Unearthing the Hidden Symbols of Western Civilization*. Thames & Hudson. Interprets thousands of Neolithic artifacts as evidence for long-lasting, earth-centered goddess cultures with relatively peaceful social patterns. vgosau.kiev.ua
- Eisler, R. *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*. Harper & Row. Proposes a historical shift from "partnership" (more egalitarian, often goddess-honoring) to "dominator" (patriarchal, warlike) cultures, arguing that war and the "war of the sexes" are culturally produced, not inevitable. [Goodreads](#)
- Ruether, R. R. *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. HarperCollins. Tracks how Western Christian symbols have legitimated domination of women and nature, and sketches an ecofeminist theology of mutuality and planetary healing. [Goodreads](#)
- Christ, C. P. *Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality*. Routledge. Explores contemporary goddess spirituality as an alternative symbol system centered on embodied, relational, earth-honoring divinity. [Google Books](#)
- Mies, M., & Shiva, V. *Ecofeminism*. Zed Books. A North–South analysis that links patriarchy, capitalism, militarism, and ecological destruction, arguing that domination of women and domination of nature are structurally intertwined. [Goodreads](#)

These works, despite methodological debates, make intelligible the idea that the "dethroning" of the Mother and the loss of feminine divine symbols correlate with the rise of large-scale, institutionalized violence against both people and earth.

12.4 Political theology, war, and violence studies

Finally, political theologians and theorists of violence help articulate how gendered God-images relate to war, sacrifice, and structural domination.

- Girard, R. *Violence and the Sacred*. Johns Hopkins University Press. A classic analysis of sacrifice, scapegoating, and mimetic desire, showing how sacralized violence can stabilize societies while concealing its own mechanisms. [Wikipedia](#)
- Girard, R. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. Stanford University Press. Extends the mimetic and scapegoat theory, engaging biblical texts and suggesting that the Gospel unveils and interrupts sacrificial violence. [Wikipedia](#)
- Wink, W. *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*. Fortress Press. First volume of Wink's "Powers" trilogy, analyzing how the New Testament names structural and spiritual powers that can be either fallen or redeemed. [Internet Archive](#)
- Wink, W. *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. Fortress Press. Develops a practical theology of nonviolent resistance to systemic domination, rooted in Jesus's teaching and practice. [Internet Archive](#)
- Moltmann, J. *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. Fortress Press. Interprets the cross as God's self-identification with victims of violence and as a critique of triumphalist, omnipotent images of God. [Matlana's Blog](#)
- Brock, R. N., & Parker, R. A. *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*. Beacon Press. Argues that early Christian art centered on paradise and the living Christ, and that later fixation on the crucified body aligned Christianity more closely with empire and violence. [Internet Archive](#)
- Gutiérrez, G. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Orbis Books. Foundational text of liberation theology, insisting that authentic Christian faith entails solidarity with the oppressed and structural critique of violence and poverty. [Wikipedia](#)
- Soelle, D. Key works including *Suffering* and political-theological essays. Develop a spirituality of nonviolence, critiquing authoritarian, patriarchal images of God that legitimate suffering and calling for a God of solidarity and co-suffering love. [theway.org.uk+1](#)

Taken together, these authors help frame how sacralized domination, sacrificial logics, and imperial Christologies can be read as symptoms of a one-sided, masculinized conception of God—and why recovering the Divine Feminine is not merely a matter of private devotion but of dismantling theological patterns that have too often baptized war and violence.

The author has published over 4,600 AI-assisted papers at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Douglas-Youvan/research> . Google Scholar has indexed these preprints, and if you want a particular reference, the AI mode of a Google search (Gemini) has efficiently catalogued these preprints.