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Who Killed Stutz Bearcat: Stories of Finding Faith after Loss

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Part IV consists of discourses on the Trinity, on God's participation in the suffering of the created world, and on the suitability of naming God with the symbol SHE WHO IS. This striking phrase is an adaptation of Thomas Aquinas' formulation "QUI EST" (usually rendered "HE WHO IS"). It harks from the biblical story of Moses' encounter with the living God in a burning bush (Exod. 3:14). The symbol effectively points toward God's "absolute relational livingness" (243), and also evokes recollections of God's particular works in history.

This is a superb book which will become a valued part of my feminist library. It is so filled with helpful insights that it is difficult to choose which among them to highlight. Of special importance is Johnson's treatment of the theme of God's personified Wisdom—in Greek, *Sophia*. Johnson traces the appearance of the powerful figure of divine Sophia in the wisdom writings of the Hebrew Scriptures and the deuterocanonical books, where, she argues, Sophia is best understood as "a female personification of God's own being in creative and saving involvement with the world" (91).

Johnson then shows how the figure of Sophia was used in New Testament and patristic writings to interpret the significance of Christ. The image is at the heart of the earliest cosmic christology, and, along with the equivalent masculine symbol of the divine Word or Logos, was instrumental in the development of the doctrine of the Incarnation. The willingness of the church in the first Christian centuries to use feminine imagery in reference to the person of Jesus Christ greatly undercuts any christology which makes Jesus' historical maleness essential to his function as the Christ, or which makes maleness characteristic of the essence of God.

I greatly appreciate Johnson's critical appropriation of Scripture and the historical Christian tradition in her search for a doctrine of God which is truly both Christian and feminist. I must make special mention of her illuminating treatment of the role of analogy in theolo-

gical speech, and her careful affirmation of trinitarian discourse which is grounded in the "multifaceted" Christian experience of the one God (191).

And finally, I must again commend the grace and power of Johnson's own style. Indeed, *She Who Is* is bound to inspire not only probing theological thinking, but also liturgical creativity. As Johnson herself reminds us, language which authentically points toward the mystery of God also evokes a sense of wonder and an attitude of praise.

Reviewed by CONSTANCE D. COLLORA, a graduate student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, specializing in New Testament and early church history.



**Who Killed Stutz Bearcat?
Stories of Finding Faith after Loss**
by Kristen Johnson Ingram
Resource Publications, Inc., 1993
paper, 90 pages, \$9

While trying to organize my study, I knelt down to pick up from the pile of books on the floor the new one Kristen Ingram had just sent me. I didn't have time to read it then; I would just page through it. But down on my haunches I never stopped until I finished the first chapter about the death of the little boy who was a friend of Kristen's grandson. As a skilled writer, Kristen knows how to *show*, not tell, profound spiritual truths and wrenching pain through the nitty-gritty details of her own life. As a committed believer, she affirms Christ risen from the dead, first to her grieving grandson and now to all her readers.

I was honored to find that three of the nine chapters in this book were previously published in *Daughters of Sarah*: "The Pomegranate Seeds" (on the care of the earth, May/June 1990), "Which Passeth All Understanding" (on war and peace, Spring 1992) and "The Beginning of Wisdom" (on aging,

Jan/Feb 1990).

I first met Kristin through her wonderful and wild book *With the Huckleberry Christ* (Winston, 1987) which deeply ministered to me at a dark time in my own life. *Who Killed Stutz Bearcat?* is its sequel. At the end of each chapter in this book there are a prayer and suggestions for reflection and faith-sharing, as well as ideas for journaling.

If you are grieving, feeling dead, or in need of hope in your life, read this book. Even if it means sitting on the floor.

Reviewed by RETA HALTEMAN
FINGER *who manages to live in Chicago and Virginia simultaneously, while traveling at warp speed.*



**In the Wake of the Goddesses:
Women, Culture, and the Biblical
Transformation of Pagan Myth**

by Tikva Frymer-Kensky
The Free Press, 1992
292 pages, paper, \$25

In the Wake of the Goddesses intrigued me from the first sentence. The author, a scholar of the ancient Near East, said she began her research in response to current feminist theologies of "the Goddess," which seemed at odds with her reading of ancient texts.

The first section of the book examines the roles and functions of goddesses in Assyrian religion. Gods and goddesses ruled nature and culture. Each city-state had a pantheon, led by a chief god or goddess; each family had a patron god/dess, as did each individual. Goddesses controlled human reproduction, but not, surprisingly, agricultural fertility. Moreover, what Mesopotamians considered three activities basic to civilized life were controlled by goddesses: "the wearing of cloth, the eating of grain, and the drinking of beer" (32). As time passed, though, goddesses' functions declined. By the end of the second

millennium, the world "was a male's world, above and below; and the ancient goddesses have all but disappeared" (80).

The second section examines how biblical monotheism transformed people's views of themselves and the universe. Rather than the polytheistic understanding of nature as a balance of interactive divine forces, Israel's covenant with God assumed God's sufficiency to meet all their needs. This assumption, Frymer-Kensky asserts, was revolutionary. Now, one God controls the rain, agricultural fertility, health; one God is master of all the forces of nature.

But this new way of thinking presented a problem. If God is all-powerful, who impels God to act? One important answer—an answer relevant to Christians—placed humans in the position to initiate change. God's absolute power moves in response to human behavior. The key here is that "only non-ritualistic activity—fidelity and ethical behavior—bring[s] about the well-being of the people" (106). In opposition to ancient thought which saw the gods as mediating between humanity and nature, the Bible depicts humanity mediating between nature and God.

In ancient Near Eastern myths, the gods provide humanity with all the essentials of human civilization. By contrast, in the Bible, cultural achievements are not gifts from God; rather, the ability to create culture is a fundamental human characteristic. Because of the absence of goddesses, humans gain prominence as bringers of culture. Significantly, the exception to this rule is law, which is divinely inspired. The culture is controlled by people, but the central institutions—Torah, priesthood, sacrificial systems, prophets—were all "divinely conceived and granted to Israel, which must guard them as special and sacred, and must demonstrate gratitude for these divine gifts" (114).

The section continues with analysis of biblical stories about women. Though it assumes male privilege in society, the Bible "show[s] women as having the same inherent character as men" (120), and makes no demand that they be