

Friends of Silence

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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”



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Dear friends ~ Marveling at how very young children accomplish the astonishing feat of language acquisition makes me wonder about the power and meaning of words. The nature of being human is that we need to shape thought into language. The way we use language with each other can either hurt or heal, confound or connect. As inadequate as they may be, words help us attach names to meanings, express and share ideas, and circle round questions together. How do words in turn shape our ideas and beliefs? What does it mean to use culturally laden or gender specific names for God? Do they help us to understand more about God or about ourselves? If various world religions have different words for names of God—the Compassionate One, the Light, the Truth, the Eternal, the Creator—is this more a matter of form than substance, language than meaning? And what is the Word we listen for in the Silence?



Rumi said that all words are fingers pointing to the moon, and we think the words are the moon. But because of the light, the light of love, the energy and motion that have called us to prayer, bits of this deeper reality are perceivable, and little bits of it will have to do.

~from *HELP, THANKS, WOW: THE THREE ESSENTIAL PRAYERS* by Anne Lamott

Among the greatest gifts we have been given are the names of God. ~ Kabir Helminski

It is the nature of a word to reveal what is hidden. The word that is hidden still sparkles in the darkness and whispers in the silence. It entices us to pursue it and to yearn and sigh after it. For it wishes to reveal to us something about God.

~Meister Eckhart

What we love becomes our language.

~from *HOW, THEN, SHALL WE LIVE?* by Wayne Muller

Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair.

Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble.

~ Yehuda Berg



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Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. ~ Proverbs 16:24

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart. ~ Nelson Mandela

The language of the lips is easily taught, but who can teach the language of the heart? ~ Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi

The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamoring to become visible. ~ Vladimir Nabokov

“Logos” is more than “Word.” It means the fullest expression of a creative idea in outer manifestation.

~ from *THE WORK LIFE* by Beryl Pogson

[Humans became human] by breaking into the daylight of language—whether by good fortune or bad fortune, whether by pure chance, the spark jumping the gap because the gap was narrow enough, or by the touch of God, it is not for me to say here.

~ Walker Percy in *THE MESSAGE IN THE BOTTLE*

The term *Gaia* has caught on among those seeking a new ecological spirituality as a religious vision. Gaia is seen as a personified being, an immanent divinity. Some see the Jewish and Christian male monotheistic God as a hostile concept that rationalizes alienation from and neglect of the earth...I agree with much of this critique, yet I believe that merely replacing a male transcendent deity with an immanent female one is an insufficient answer...

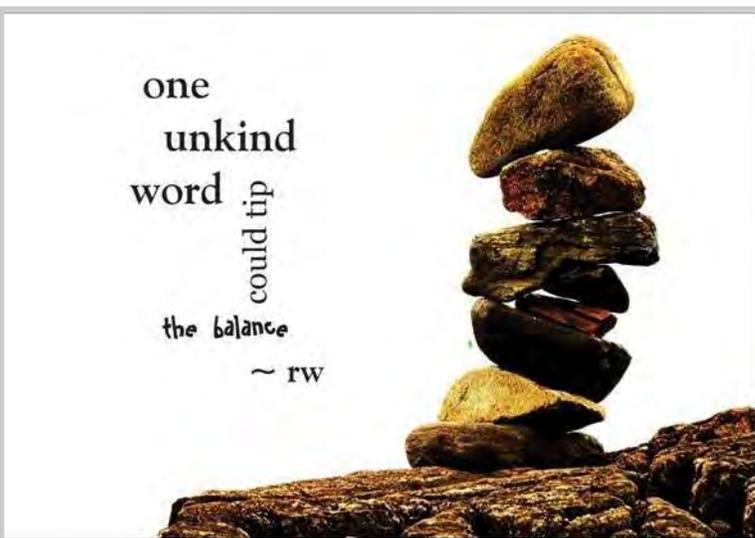
~ from Rosemary Radford Ruether in *GAIA AND GOD: AN ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGY OF EARTH HEALING*

I worry about the tyranny of language which is incapable of containing mystery.

~ Madeline L'Engle

The language we use reflects and in turn shapes the way we construct our experience of the world. (Plaskow acknowledges that)...all of these images of God are humanly crafted metaphors, but our metaphors emerge out of specific cultural and political context. When these contexts change, the old metaphors must change with them.

~ from “The Feminist Critique of God Language” by Dr. Neil Gillman, reprinted from *THE WAY INTO ENCOUNTERING GOD IN JUDAISM*, discussing Judith Plaskow’s book *STANDING AGAIN AT SINAI*



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“The Tamil language is very precise,” the Tamil poet said.

“There are seven different words between the English words, ‘bud’ and ‘flower.’”

One would have to live in attentive quiet, live with the plant, marveling at each subtle change to create such a language.

Love creates such a language.

~from *WILD SEEDS* by Francis Rothluebber

It is all too easy and too simple to disdain as “superstition” everything one cannot understand, but the ancients themselves knew very well what they meant when they used symbolic language...the Spirit can always come back to breathe fresh life into the symbols and rites and give them back their lost meaning and the fullness of their original virtue.

~ from *THE SWORD OF GNOSIS* by René Guénon

There is an incline from silence to language, to the truth of the word; and the gravitational force of this incline pushes truth on still further from language down into the active life of the world.

~ from *THE WORLD OF SILENCE* by Max Picard