

# Spiritual Hermaphroditism or Thinking with the Androgynous Soul

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## ABSTRACT

“Oedipus complex and spiritual intelligence: Are men less spiritual than women? Part I” examined Sigmund Freud’s Oedipus complex and Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* in the light of male spiritual intelligence. In it, we argued that men are likely to be less spiritually intelligent than women. We extrapolated the findings of the Pew Research Center 2016 Report which found that women were generally — but not essentially or universally — more religious than men. Part II argues that patriarchy and toxic masculinity, have made men less spiritually intelligent by canonising the alpha male. The result is that most men are unable to realise their full potential as created *imago Dei* or spiritual hermaphrodites. Disavowing patriarchalism enables them to embrace their androgyny. Utilising the example of South African athlete, Caster Mokgadi Semenya, we argue that wherever we find ourselves on the continuum between the poles of male and female, even as inter-sex, we are all called to realise our spiritual hermaphroditism. In a nutshell, Part II is an invitation to think with the androgynous soul. Methodologically, we asked respondents to answer four questions on spiritual intelligence and gender fluidity. The theoretical framework chosen for both Part I and Part II was Sigmund Freud’s Oedipus complex, interpreted as a power drive in men to dethrone their father. We used online and offline surveys to generate the state of public opinion on the subject in academia. As purposive sampling, the number of returned questionnaires was inconsequential. Part II’s objective is to adumbrate a new theory of human sexuality called spiritual hermaphroditism, which would act as an antidote to toxic masculinity. Part II also required its own methodology, a literary-linguistic-syntactic analysis and hermeneutics of suspicion of Gen 1:26–28 and 2:7, which was not dependent on informants’ views but addressed spiritual hermaphroditism.

**Keywords:** Spiritual Intelligence; Spiritual Hermaphroditism; Heteronormativity; *Elohim*; *Imago Dei*; Hermeneutics of Suspicion; Androgyny.

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to adumbrate our theory of spiritual hermaphroditism<sup>1</sup> or thinking with the androgynous soul and why that matters. We define spiritual hermaphroditism as the capacity to embrace and live out to one’s full potential and at the deepest level of the soul our given sex, based on an interpretation of the Judaeo-Christian notion of humanity created *imago Dei*. None of us is a perfect copy of the prototype androgyne *Adam*, whether physically or spiritually. In Part I, 55% of informants did not agree with our hypothesis that men were likely to be less spiritually intelligent than women. Our task was to explain informants’ positions and these were likely due to patriarchy and toxic masculinity. Men’s full participation as God’s viceroy and stewards of creation may not be fully actualised without embracing their androgyny as women have. That is why women are likely to make better single parents as both mother and father than men. Ironically, even male celibates have embraced their androgyny as single spiritual parents. Spiritual hermaphroditism has implications beyond metaphorisation of genitality, sexuality and gender. Ultimately it is the future of the planet that is at stake here. We use the example of a biological hermaphrodite,<sup>2</sup> South African athlete, Caster Mokgadi Semenya<sup>3</sup> to develop our theory of spiritual hermaphroditism — uncharted waters for this researcher. We argue, against the grain, that hermaphrodites or intersex people<sup>4</sup> and celibates help to challenge our uneasiness with gender fluidity and why humanity was created male-female. This uneasiness exposes our discomfort with transgressions of binary gender, whether such boundaries are broken by anatomy, sexuality, celibacy as a vocation or non-conformity with gendered stereotypes of identity. It also exposes our obsession with genitality, sex, procreation, marriage and our

discomfort with celibacy. Apropos intersexuality, either the divine manufacturer got this one wrong or wanted to drive home why he created humanity as spiritually androgynous to be his viceroys.

The main conclusion of this article is that being created androgynously is about embracing the female-male in each of us. We were created to be icons of a spiritually androgynous God who is both male-female in order to be his viceroys on earth as responsible stewards of the cosmos. Ironically, by freely foregoing genitality, celibates in many religious traditions such as Hinduism or Catholicism make the same point. But that is matter for another discussion. Spiritual hermaphroditism has societal ramifications, whether in marriage or outside it, in the Church or in society. The male is not more superior to the female. Either male or female or both can be the bread winners and a female, even the President of a country and a good one at that, as Tanzania is showing the world. Married women assuming their husband's surname is the epitome of toxic masculinity, the "collection of offensive, harmful beliefs, tendencies, and behaviours rooted in traditional male roles but taken to an extreme."<sup>5</sup> The central thesis of this article is that humanity was created spiritually androgynous, not primarily for sexual copulation, marriage and procreation but to mirror God's own androgyny and to collaborate with him as stewards of the cosmos, through a quadruple set of relationships to self, others, divinity and the cosmos. The Penny Catechism nailed this. To the question, "Why did God make you?" the answer was rightly, "God made me to know him, love him and serve him in this world, and to be happy with him for ever in the next," the latter clause notwithstanding or even demonstrable. Sex and marriage are important byproducts of stewardship but not essential to it. Certainly not for everyone. Hermaphrodites, eunuchs, celibates and those who are unable to sexually copulate or reproduce, carry within their copy of the prototype androgyne *Adam* a reminder to think existentially with the soul rather than with their genitalia. No wonder a *Quora* contributor was forced to question a typically male obsession, "How do I stop thinking with my dick and start thinking with my brain?"<sup>6</sup> In this writer's view, by embracing one's androgyneity and developing spiritual intelligence.

Part II extrapolates the intersection of spiritual intelligence and androgyneity and applies them to eight discussion points: 1. When gay stopped being full of joy or mirth; 2. Male-female, he created them; 3. Why men need to embrace their androgyneity or become gayer; 4. Ambiguous gender identity and spiritual hermaphroditism; 5. Spiritual hermaphroditism to our gender rescue; 6. *Imago Dei* and the Divine mandate to humanity to be God's viceroy on earth 7. Biology versus socialisation and gender identity and 8. Spiritual intelligence and spiritual hermaphroditism or thinking with the soul.

## Research Problem

Part II's more specific research problem concerns the first of the two texts: Gen 1:26–28 and 2:7. Despite its presentation of the human prototype *Adam* as an androgyne, the quintessential hermaphrodite, commentators through the ages have contrived to interpret the bifurcation of the sexes as normative instead of androgyny. What they were interpreting and normalising was binary gender, already common when the Bible was edited. When this writer shared the abstract of this article on *Facebook*, he was reminded:

The Hindu concept has the all-enveloping *Ardhanari*, the principle of half man half woman, meaning that both sexes reside within each individual and have the nature/nurture concept irrespective of the sex you are bestowed with (Mary Ann Negi, *Facebook* post, 23 September 2024).<sup>7</sup>

This article returns to the *Ur*-interpretation of the prototype androgyne *Adam* in keeping with the Hindu, Ancient Near Eastern and Greek mythology rather than the 6th century BCE cultural justification of sexual bifurcation. This *Ur*-interpretation is found in Ancient Near Eastern texts and in Greek mythology, including the Sumerian *Enki* and *Ninmah*, the Akkadian *Atrahasis*, the *Orphic Hymns* and Aristophanes' tale in Plato's *Symposium*, to name but a few. Such a hermaphroditic interpretation of Gen 1:26–28 allows for a return to the proto-human androgyne and perfect type, the pre-fall of humanity *Adam*, which St Paul's baptismal anthropology expresses in Gal 3:27–28 in which the new self is a spiritual post-hermaphrodite.

As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, *there is no longer male [or] female*; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:27–28 *NRSV* — author's italics).

## The Research: Offline and Online Surveys

### Number of offline questionnaires sent out: 100

These offline questionnaires were initially targeted at members of staff at which this researcher lectured but later scaled up to other colleges, seminaries and universities within the same town as well as outside. Their nature was purposive. This meant that the number of returned questionnaires was inconsequential.

### Number of offline questionnaires returned: 51 (30 females and 21 males)

At 51% the number of returned questionnaires, this provided a firm basis for the purposive sampling they were intended for. It indicated a higher number of informants was unlikely to flip the results. There was no need to make up for the 49 unreturned questionnaires as suggested by the peer reviewer. Usually, one would be happy enough anyway with a return of between 5% and 30% even for non-purposive sampling. As if that were not enough, the online survey, did more than make up for non-returned questionnaires.

### Number of online respondents: 20 (15 males and 5 females)

The Social Media survey on *Facebook*, where the researcher is listed as having 732 friends, was meant to triangulate the findings of the research and as was expected, their results did not differ significantly from the above offline survey. The major difference was that there was a bigger uptake by men more than women. One reason might be that social media lacked the anonymity of the paper survey, even though *Facebook* users were given the option of responding via private messaging or WhatsApp.

## FINDINGS

Below is a summary in percentage terms of responses to the online and offline surveys on gender and spiritual intelligence.

### 1. Do you agree with the hypothesis that men are less religious or spiritual or that they have less spiritual intelligence than women?

Agree: 40% (48 out of 120)

Do not agree: 55% (66 out of 120)

Not sure: 5% (6 out of 120)

### 2. Can faith and reason go together or can spirituality and the intellect go together?

Yes: 40% (48 out of 120)

No: 55% (66 out of 120)

Not sure: 5% (6 out of 120)

### 3. Do you agree with a non-binary view of gender as part of a continuum between the poles male and female and the many shades of ambiguity in between?

Agree: 20% (24 out of 120)

Do not agree: 75% (90 out of 120)

Not sure: 5% (6 out of 120)

### 4. What in your own opinion constitutes spiritual intelligence?

Essentially, our respondents understood this question as asking for the marks or things a spiritual person

does: (1) hunger for God's word; (2) dependency on prayer; (3) humility and obedience; (4) compassion; (5) longsuffering and forgiveness; (6) love towards the neighbour; (7) endurance and faithfulness; (8) Church-going; (9) Spiritually born-again; (10) Spiritual purpose-driven. (11) Responsible for stewardship of creation; (12) Thirst for justice (13) Peace-loving; (14) Altruism; (15) Kindness.

## DISCUSSION

There were no major surprises from the surveys save for the 40% respondents who answered in the affirmative that men were less religious or spiritual or that they have less spiritual intelligence than women. This was higher than expected in a patriarchal culture heavily marked by toxic masculinity. But heteronormative responses were not limited to men. This writer's former student of Theology begged to differ with the men-likely-to-be-less-spiritually-intelligent-than-women hypothesis, but adds a Christocentric spin that agrees with this writer.

My view on this is that it feeds into society's obsession with gender these days. It is interesting the Pew Report identifies women as being more religious, but maybe they are just more overt and visible? In my view Christ wouldn't care about male or female but what lies in the heart whoever we are. So, anything else doesn't matter and is purely academic (Kathy Bishop, *Facebook* post, 23 September 2024).

What she did not say was whether the gender obsession was justified or not or how non-binary gender fits into her theology. Our spiritual hermaphroditism theory does justifiably feed into the gender debate today. *Pace*, this writer's former student, this debate does matter and is not purely academic.

What was fortuitous about both the online and offline surveys is that the answers to the last question were supported by various passages of Scripture such as 1 Cor 13 (St Paul's understanding of Spiritual Intelligence) and Mt 5 (Beatitudes). Given that Zambia, the country locus of the research is constitutionally a Christian Nation, with Christians in overwhelming majority in the country (95.5%),<sup>8</sup> this familiarity with the Bible was not surprising. Here is an example of one source of the respondents' answers.

<sup>4</sup>Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup>does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails (1 Cor 13:4–13 *NKJV*).

The Christian Nation context, patriarchy and toxic masculinity are responsible for most answers to the survey. In Zambia, attitudes to gender tend to toe the heteronormative line — a concept or even praxis denoting or relating to a worldview that promotes heterosexuality as the normative sexual identity. What follows is a discussion of eight implications arising from the conjunction of spiritual intelligence and our being created as spiritual hermaphrodites: 1. When gay stopped being full of joy or mirth; 2. Male-female, he created them; 3. Why men need to embrace androgyny or become gayer; 4. Ambiguous gender identity and spiritual hermaphroditism; 5. Spiritual hermaphroditism to our gender rescue; 6. *Imago Dei* and the Divine mandate to humanity to be God's viceroy on earth 7. Biology versus socialisation and gender identity and 8. Spiritual intelligence and spiritual hermaphroditism or thinking with the soul.

Part of the underlying thesis of this research is that patriarchy is uneasy with gender transgression or gender ambiguity. It is obsessed with genitality, penis size, the body beautiful, procreation, marriage and is uncomfortable with celibacy. In Africa, the obsession with procreation is weighted in favour of male children and bigger numbers, helped in no small measure by polygyny, whether successive or simultaneous.

### When Gay Stopped Being Full of Joy or Mirth

The reader was alerted earlier that men needed to embrace their androgyny or become gayer. It is time to open that Pandora's box. Today that box is labelled gay. In 1951, the adjective gay appeared for the first time in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the mother of all English Dictionaries, as a slang for homosexual. Today the word gay, while acceptable to the LGBTQI community, it is used pejoratively by outsiders as meaning illicit, counter-cultural or comporting oneself unethically in ways that go against heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is of



course the view that you are either male or female and that the two were wired to sexually attract each other. Anything else is an aberration. Over time, heteronormativity has been ratcheted up by toxic masculinity by privileging the male gender over the female in a way that contradicts the biblical equality of the sexes. In the English language, the word gay is of ancient vintage, going back to the 12th century, meaning “full of joy or mirth.” The *Oxford Reference* goes on to say that gay is an adjective “meaning cheerful or carefree that acquired an association with loose morals and sexual licentiousness in the 19th century, and in approximately the 1940s came into use among members of the homosexual community to describe male homosexuality. In this context, it has no pejorative connotation.” It is to that non-pejorative connotation of being “cheerful or carefree” or “full of joy or mirth” that this researcher wishes to return. This understanding is in keeping with the meaning of gaiety which has not changed, meaning “the state or quality of being light-hearted or cheerful.” A couple of New Testament references point to gay or gaiety as being full of joy or mirth.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer [θαρσεῖτε]; I have overcome the world (John 16:33 *KJV*).

Rejoice [Χαίρετε] in the Lord always: and again, I say, Rejoice [Χαίρετε] (Philippians 4:4 *KJV*).

The reason why men need to embrace androgyny or become gayer must ultimately be traced back to humanity being created *imago Dei* in the first place, which we now take up presently. But first, in Part I we noted how men found the isolation engendered by the Covid-19 pandemic harder to cope with. The kind of non-productive being rather than productive doing they were being challenged to accept was already par for the course for the spiritually intelligent female. The men were also being challenged to “the state or quality of being light-hearted or cheerful” or being gay, under non-Alpha male conditions. Their male ego had nothing to feed off. The real reason why men struggled to cope with the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown is that the Alpha male abhors the female as its weak nemesis while driven by unsuccessful resolution of their Oedipus complex and are likely to be less spiritually intelligent than the female. In response to the abstract of this article on Facebook, Francis Chanda, a former student of this writer, opined:

Oedipus complex — a sexual throbbing that drives young boys to viciously compete with their father vis-à-vis their attraction to the mother. The angle of fixation or developmental error that may ensue from failure to resolve that complex, could arguably negatively impact men’s spirituality which, no doubt, falls below that of women in most cases. At the same time, masculinity along with its hubris, is something that is constantly at war with spiritual disposition. Hence, generally, men take back benches when it comes to being spiritual (Francis Chanda, *Facebook* post, 23 September 2024).

In some Churches, there is a quasi-dogma that places the blame for the fall and original sin at the hands of the woman. Despite its elevated position of Mary the mother of Jesus, the Catholic Church will still not ordain women to the priesthood. Pope John Paul II made this into a quasi-dogma in his Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994).<sup>9</sup> The better solution to men’s self-inflicted alienation and misogyny was and is, to embrace androgyny and become gayer, which brings us to why humanity was created *imago Dei* in the first place.

### Male-Female, He Created Them

In the popular mind, male and female or binary gender are about sex and children. This thinking with genitalia forgets that the All-powerful Deity who created other species to reproduce asexually could have done the same for the human species if he had so wished. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, even sex is about much more than orgasm and reproduction. It is about relationship and collaboration, an insight already acknowledged by Aristotle when he coined the aphorism “man (*sic*) is a social/political animal” [πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζῷον]. Let us cite the relevant biblical text at our disposal together with the author’s translation, which is already slightly at odds with the surface meaning of the text.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵינוּ וַיְרַדְדוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ

וַיְבָרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמֵם בְּצֶלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם (Gen 1.26–27) [Then *Elohim* said, “Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over

the birds of the air, and over wild beasts, and over all the earth and over creatures that swarm the earth.” And *Elohim* saw that it was good. And *Elohim* created humanity. In his image and likeness *Elohim* created them. [That is], male and female, he created them — my translation]

This text is often cited in support of heteronormativity, which even the International Theological Commission’s “Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God,”<sup>10</sup> supports. In this binary model, gender and sexuality are assumed by default to align with one’s biological sex given naturally at birth. For example, when a male is born, gender binarism assumes that the male will be masculine in appearance, have masculine features and behaviours, as well as have a heterosexual attraction to females and vice versa. This interpretation of the text leaves little room for non-binary gender and sometimes even for celibacy as our informants indicated. Regarding celibacy, incidentally, Jesus had the following pronouncement which may well apply to sexually gay people.

<sup>11</sup> But he said to them, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. <sup>12</sup>For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can” (Mt 1:11–12 *NRSV*).

The most common academic explanation for the plural in Gen 1:26 is that *Elohim* is originally a plural noun but used here as a *pluralis maiestatis* and that the verse is a polytheistic remnant. There may be a simpler explanation. The male-female in *Elohim* may constitute a duality expressed here as a plurality. To anticipate part of our exegesis of Gen 1:27, Thomas Gudbergsen argued that “when mankind [*sic*] is created in the image of God as male and female, they do not merely look and behave like him, they are his representatives” (Gudbergsen 2012: 450). He goes on to ask the rhetorical question: “The point is then that if the duality of gender in the referent [*hā’ādām*] manifests divine attributes, should not the object, ‘*elōhîm*, also be understood as dual in gender?” (Gudbergsen 2012: 450). This is his conclusion, and ours too:

Therefore, in conclusion, we can say that we have three reasonable arguments for saying that ‘*elōhîm* contains both female and male genders. A syntactic analysis of Gen 1:27b–c sets the scene for such a statement. This is furthermore supported by a comparison of the biblical *šelem* with the Mesopotamian *šalmu*. Finally, as we saw, other places in Scripture give strength to the argument that actually ‘*elōhîm* is both male and female (Gudbergsen 2012: 453).

What follows is a literary-linguistic-syntactic analysis and hermeneutics of suspicion of the biblical text of Gen 1:27. The term hermeneutics of suspicion was coined by Paul Ricoeur to describe reading the text against the grain to expose its repressed or hidden meaning. The present discussion examines the meaning of Gen 1:27 beyond its popular and surface meaning but the first challenge of interpreting any text of the Bible is the translation we use. Translations are always interpretations. Although this article is in English, the author has had recourse to the original Hebrew text. The second challenger is for the interpreter to read into the text their current concept of sexuality. The third challenge is how the original author structured his text at the micro level.

In the case of Gen 1:27, at the micro level of the text is Gen 1:27–28a which this author reproduces below. Most scholars will agree that Gen 1:27–28a is an example of a chiasmic structure in the form AB//B’A’ in which the two internal lines (B and B’) correspond to each other as do the two external lines (A and A’). Lines B and B’ are meant to explain each other. This means בְּצַלְמוֹ [in the image] corresponds to זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה [male and female] and to אִתּוֹ [it/him] and אֹתָם [them]. In the outer lines, הֵאָדָם [humanity] in line A corresponds to אֹתָם [them] in line A’ as do וַיִּבְרָא [and he created] and וַיְבָרֶךְ [and he blessed].

Masoretic Hebrew Text	Author’s English Translation
וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ A	A – And <i>Elohim</i> created humanity in its image
בְּצַלְמוֹ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ B	B – In the image of <i>Elohim</i> he created it

זָכַר וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֱדָם	B'	B' – Male and female he created them
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם	A'	A' – And <i>Elohim</i> blessed them and said to them

**A: And *Elohim* created humanity in its image:** This verse suffers from two translational infelicities. First, the Hebrew word *Elohim* is translated into English as God. What this means is that all the attributes we ascribe to God are transferred to *Elohim*. Second, the noun *Elohim* is the plural form of *El* or possibly *Eloah*. It is the first name of deity in the Hebrew Bible. Grammatically, *Elohim* is constructed as a plural form that takes singular verbs and adjectives. Unlike some Bantu languages in which God is genderless, *Elohim* is masculine. Here it is rendered as a plural, giving rise to the misunderstanding that the Trinity is found in the book of Genesis.

**B: In the image of *Elohim*, he created it:** Most translations have got this wrong again by rendering the text “In the image of God he created him” simply because they already mistranslated Gen 1.26a וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם כְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ as “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (*KJV*) instead of “and God said, let us make humanity in our image, that is in our likeness. The translation is not completely off as it allows for the interpretation of “him” as a reference to the pro-human androgyne *Adam*.

**B' Male and female he created them:** The possible misunderstanding here is that “them” refers to Adam and Eve. They do not appear until the next chapter. “Them” here refers to humanity who are created male and female. Alternatively, it refers to androgyneity. In keeping with the creation of humanity as male and female, this means at the deepest level of our psyche, each one of us is both male and female regardless of biology. Given what we now know about gender, the authors could only understand gender in binary terms. In our state of the science of gender, although we are all born biologically male or female (and some both), at the level of the psyche and the spirit, we are both male and female. The more integrated we are as male-female, the more “full of joy or mirth” we are. The underlying thesis of this article is that women, and possibly gay people, have done a better job of this than heterosexual men. That is the main reason they need to embrace their androgyneity.

**A' And *Elohim* blessed them and said to them:** The most important word (three in English) in this line is, וַיְבָרֶךְ [And he blessed] but the significance of the Hebrew gets lost in our understanding of bless. Its meaning lies primarily in the subject of the verb. If used of the human subject, the verb has something to do with acknowledging the goodness of God. If used of the divine subject, it means unleashing his goodness. The object of blessing — them — is primarily the two sexes or genders. Humanity is given the blessing to be stewards of the cosmos through intense desire like the sexual appetite and the collaboration of opposites.

### Why Men Need to Embrace their Androgyneity or Become Gayer

The main reason why men need to embrace androgyneity or become gayer, at least for those for whom the Bible is the main source of divine revelation, is that a heterosexual approach or binary understanding of human sexuality may not be the only valid interpretation of Gen 1:27. It may just be possible that other shades of gender and sexuality may have been divinely intended, such as the case of South African Athlete Caster Semenya discussed in this article, whether at creation or through evolution or even human irresponsibility. A secondary reason may well lie in science, as the views of Miles Griffis and Melanie Ortiz indicate (Griffis 2024; Ortiz 2020). It may well be that what Jesus said of the science and psychology of a eunuch in first century Palestine is equally applicable to the science and psychology of a gay person today.

<sup>11</sup> But he said to them, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. <sup>12</sup>For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can” (Mt 19:11–12 *NRSV*).

Although Gen 1:27 speaks of gender in binary terms of male and female, it is at least possible that over time our adaptation to the male and female sexual continuum may have produced other shades of sexuality. Andrew Barron and Brian Hare propose a “sociosexual hypothesis” for the evolution of gay sex and attraction too complex to unpack here. Their argument rests partly on the observation that same-sex sexuality attraction [SSSA] has existed over millennia across different cultures, even in Africa. SSSA has undergone an evolutionary process

which was primarily prosocial and sociosexual in its form.<sup>11</sup> For most of us, gender fluidity is hard to even imagine. In an article for *National Geographic*, Miles Griffis sums up what most of grew up on in our understanding of “male and female he created them.”

Many of us learned in high school biology that sex chromosomes determine a baby’s sex, full stop: XX means it’s a girl; XY means it’s a boy. But on occasion, XX and XY don’t tell the whole story.

Today we know that the various elements of what we consider “male” and “female” don’t always line up neatly, with all the XXs — complete with ovaries, vagina, estrogen, female gender identity, and feminine behavior — on one side and all the XYs — testes, penis, testosterone, male gender identity, and masculine behavior — on the other. It’s possible to be XX and mostly male in terms of anatomy, physiology, and psychology, just as it’s possible to be XY and mostly female.<sup>12</sup>

The truth of the claim above that “the various elements of what we consider “male” and “female” don’t always line up neatly, with all the XXs — complete with ovaries, vagina, estrogen, female gender identity, and feminine behavior — on one side and all the XYs — testes, penis, testosterone, male gender identity, and masculine behavior — on the other” (Griffis 2024) is well illustrated in the case of the South African athlete Caster Semenya as we shall see presently. Suffice for now to acknowledge that gender ambiguity or non-binary gender have always been part of the story of *homo sapiens* although more recently patriarchal society has become increasingly nervous about gender ambiguity. Instead, it has refined itself into toxic masculinity, a distorted view of what it means to be a man, based on designating manhood by violence, genitality, control, status and aggression as if maleness were determined by the size of the *membrum virile*. We now turn to ambiguous gender identity and what we can learn from it from the perspective of what we have referred to as spiritual hermaphroditism. We argue that this is nothing short of a return to the proto-human androgyne *Adam*.

### **Ambiguous Gender Identity and Spiritual Hermaphroditism**

If ever there was a *cause célèbre* of gender identity in the recent postmodern era, it is arguably the case of South African athlete, Caster Mokgadi Semenya. Biologically she is female but chromosomally male but proudly self-identifies as a woman as she has done in her autobiography, *The Race to Be Myself* (2023). Given our discussion on human beings created *imago Dei* as male-female, she is a perfect copy of biological hermaphroditism, which is testament to the reality that there is more to human sexuality and gender than meets the naked eye. Caster Semenya could quite comfortably sit at Jesus’ top table of “eunuchs who have been so from birth” as would celibates, “eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” and even “eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others” (Mt 19:12). Given that Jesus makes no value judgement of all three classes of eunuchs, who are we to judge? Instead, we look at Caster Semenya as if she were a freak of nature and not a child of God, created in his image and likeness.

Hermaphrodites or intersex people help to challenge societal unease, generally provoked by sexual ambiguity and the purpose of why humanity was created as male-female. This uneasiness exposes our continuing discomfort with transgression of binary gender, whether the boundaries are broken by anatomy, sexuality, or non-conformity with gendered stereotypes of identity. It also exposes our obsession with genitality, procreation, marriage and discomfort with celibacy. For a biblical scholar, such a case is an invitation to explore spiritual hermaphroditism as the logical option. Otherwise, we run the risk as we often do, to label as an abomination any manifestation of gender that is not binary or heterosexual. What follows is our answer to the question posted on *Quora*, an American social question-and-answer website and online knowledge market: “What does the Bible say about Intersex people? Is there a historically biblical approach towards them?”<sup>13</sup> What follows is an attempt at one.

### **Spiritual Hermaphroditism to our Gender Rescue**

First, the etymology of hermaphrodite. Greek mythology has it that the god Hermaphroditus, was the son of Hermes and Aphrodite. The water-nymph Salmakis, saw him bathing in a pool, fell in love with him and prayed that they might never be separated. The gods interpreted her request literally and joined the pair into one body. In both his name and his being, therefore, Hermaphroditus combines male and female through his father Hermes



and mother Aphrodite. Hermaphroditus has characteristically female facial features and breasts but typically male genitalia. Whether at creation or through evolution, the human species must have been created spiritually hermaphroditic and people like Caster Semenya model that. For the Media she, and the likes of her, is simply either “a world-famous elite athlete born with differences of sexual development (DSD)”<sup>14</sup> or an anatomical anomaly. She has written in her autobiography<sup>15</sup> that she found out at the same time as the rest of the world that she did not have a uterus or fallopian tubes and as she added, “The newspapers reported that I had undescended testicles that were the source of my higher-than-normal levels of testosterone” (BBC Sport 2023). At a landmark ruling of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in 2019, it was revealed that Caster Semenya’s specific DSD (Differences of sexual development) was confirmed as 46 XY 5–ARD (5–Alpha-reductase deficiency). She was biologically female with a vagina and chromosomally male with testes and copious amounts of testosterone to boot. Regarding her own self-identity, she told BBC Sport that she was “born without a uterus” and “with internal testicles” and added, “I am a woman and have a vagina.” If ever there was a case of Jesus’ “eunuchs who have been so from birth,” this was it. While this case has been flogged in the Media by Sports Scientists, Sports Psychologists and molecular biologists and geneticists, it has yet to attract the attention of biblical scholars and theologians. This article may well be one a theological trail blazer.

### ***Imago Dei* and the Divine Mandate to Humanity to be God’s Viceroy on Earth**

And now, second. What the Bible says. How does a biblical scholar and theologian, such as the present writer, respond to Caster Semenya’s case? Even with her 46 XY 5–ARD, Caster Semenya self-identifies as a woman, albeit with male chromosomes. More than the ordinary XX or XY person, she models in her anatomical make-up the biblical truth that human beings were created as spiritual hermaphrodites in order to illustrate the Bible’s doctrine of the creation of humanity *imago Dei*. For this, we switch to a more sustained literary-linguistic-syntactic analysis of two texts pertinent to our discussion: Gen 1:27 and Gen 1:28.

וַיֵּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדוּ בְדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הַרְמֵשׁ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Gen 1:27 — My translation).

This text forms part of the first account of the creation of humanity from the so-called Priestly Source. The other comes in chapter 2 of Genesis from the Yahwist Source. Curiously, neither the first account of creation we have cited in Gen 1:27 nor the second one in chapter 2 (which incidentally is the older account) mentions procreation as the primary purpose of creating humanity male-female). The entire Gen 1 is marked by a series of locutionary markers: וַיֵּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים (And *Elohim* said). These markers spell out God’s creationary intention. The intention behind Gen 1:27 is to create humanity as a whole, and not the first man *Adam* or at the very least, a human prototype. Commentators tie themselves in unnecessary hermeneutical knots trying to decipher the meaning of humanity being created in God’s image and likeness. The meaning is plain: וַיְרִדוּ (let them have dominion). Throughout the Bible, God is pictured as an oriental monarch over both heaven and earth. He has enough to keep him busy in heaven. He appoints humanity as his viceroy on earth. The viceroy has to answer to the monarch, his boss back in the mother country, heaven and the *modus operandi* is through the quadruple relationship to self, others, the divine and the cosmos represented by “the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” The *modus operandi* does not mention procreation until a verse later.

The intention of creating humanity is expanded into a blessing: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים (And *Elohim* blessed them). Used of God as the subject and humanity as the object, the verb to bless means enabling to flourish and excel as human beings, having the opportunity to exercise its God-given gifts and talents of creativity and productivity in such a way as contributes generously to the common good and thereby to the glory of God. If this is accepted, it changes the meaning of why we are created and why we work. Contrary to the Capitalist model of work as production and profit, it becomes a journey of self-discovery and of blessedness to be unleashed for the greater good of humanity. The Socialist model tried this and failed miserably. The Capitalist mode of production is characterised by private ownership of the means of production, extraction of surplus value and selfishness by the owning class for the purpose of recapitalisation. The markets become more important than the human worker who is a means to profit for the owner rather than the common good. Everything and everyone have a price,

including the human person. For much of modern Christianity, this Capitalist mode of production has given an exploitative spin to the mandate to have dominion. While its meaning of treading down, subjugating, or prevailing against is its primary linguistic sense, it must be transformed by the blessing of Gen 1:28.

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְכַבְּשׁוּהָ וּרְדוּ בְּדָגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ עַל-הָאָרֶץ And *Elohim* blessed them, saying to them: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every creeping creatures on earth” (Gen 1:28 — My translation).

Robert Chisholm concludes apropos Gen 1:28, “the earth is not cast in the role of an enemy or opponent of humankind” (Chisholm 1998: 46). He suggests instead a more nuanced spin to the generally understood meaning of *radah*: “to harness the potential of, to use for one’s benefit.” When used in this sense, Robert Chisholm explains, the verb does not mean “ruin” or “destroy,” but neither does it suggest any kind of especially delicate treatment, as though one were handling something fragile. Instead of “to use for one’s benefit,” we propose, “to use for humanity’s benefit.” If you notice, God’s speech in Gen 1:27 and Gen 1:28 are almost synonymous. Gen 1:27 lacks the blessing “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.” If we take this and the account in Gen 2, the conclusion that procreation was not a primary consideration for both accounts is inescapable. To be fair, procreation is largely assumed in Gen 1:27 and Gen 2 and is mentioned in Gen 1:28 not as a global imperative. The imperative was specific, directed at post-exilic Judah which had become depopulated during the period of exile in Babylon. It was Israel’s attempt to recolonise the land of Canaan. This must temper our propensity to rush to procreation when examining sex or why humanity was created male-female. On a planet that is overpopulated, it is probably irresponsible to insist on procreation as a *conditio sine qua non* for marriage, for instance. As we have argued, procreation is not the main reason why humanity was created male-female but to be an icon of an androgynous deity. The latest Catholic document on Gen 1: 26–27, *Dignitas Infinita*, does not come anywhere within whiff of the hermaphroditic implications of the text. It seems even to disagree with St Augustine below on the *imago Dei*.

Moreover, the “image” does not define the soul or its intellectual abilities but the dignity of man and woman. In their relationship of equality and mutual love, both the man and the woman represent God in the world and are also called to cherish and nurture the world. Because of this, to be created in the image of God means to possess a sacred value that transcends every distinction of a sexual, social, political, cultural, and religious nature (DDF 2024: par 11).

The last sentence agrees with us but dignity is not what is striking about the text (*pace* Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith). It is hermaphroditism. In our view, St Augustine was perhaps not too far off the mark when he argued that the image of God in the human person is to be found in his soul (i.e. rational or intellectual soul). The image of the Creator, which is immortal, is immortally implanted in its immortality in the human person. According to St Augustine, the mind is Trinitarian or better triadic, comprising of memory, understanding, and will. No better argument can be adduced for spiritual intelligence and spiritual hermaphroditism than St Augustine’s theory of *Imago Dei*. As regards how exactly men are less spiritually intelligent, we can use the metrics or qualities supplied by Richard Griffiths when defining Spiritual Intelligence in Part I, which is akin to Richard Wolman’s “Thinking with your Soul” (Wolman 2001).

Spiritual intelligence has the qualities traditionally ascribed to the soul, by virtue of the native qualities of consciousness itself, which are experienced at the subject-pole of attention in moments of presence, in the form of wisdom, compassion, integrity, joy, love, creativity, and peace.<sup>16</sup>

Danah Zohar, a leading guru in the science of Spiritual Intelligence lists “some of the behaviours that indicate high levels of spiritual intelligence” (Zohar 2018),<sup>17</sup> largely devised by Peter Saul, an Australian futuristic and change consultant: 1. Self-awareness, 2. spontaneity, 3. being vision and value-led; 4. holism, 5. compassion, 6. celebration of diversity, 7. field independence, 8. humility, 9. tendency to ask fundamental “why” questions, 10. ability to reframe, 11. positive use of adversity, and 12. sense of vocation. Our argument throughout has been that women are more likely to exhibit these traits much more than their menfolk. In this writer’s household, however, it was his father who exhibited these spiritual values more than his mother. These spiritual traits seem

to confirm the famous quote attributed to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Biology Versus Socialisation and Gender Identity**

In an article entitled “The evolutionary science behind gender,” Melanie Ortiz asks the question, “Is our sense of gender identity truly based solely on our social existence, or is there a biological basis behind the evolution of gender?”<sup>19</sup> Most of us are brought up on a steady diet of sexual binarism and are most likely to say gender identity for non-binary sexuality is a matter of social conditioning or a lifestyle choice. What this article is asking is that we give a more nuanced answer the benefit of the doubt. In a review of Joan Roughgarden’s *Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People*, Bonnie Spanier, author of *Im/partial Science: Gender Ideology in Molecular Biology* opines:

[*Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People*] challenges not only the assumptions about male-female differences in behaviour and homosexual-heterosexual differences, but also the very meanings of maleness and femaleness in physical and biological terms.<sup>20</sup>

The current state of the science of homosexuality seems to indicate that homosexuality is not a lifestyle choice. It is rooted in biology or nature and is not purely a result of upbringing, socialisation, or sexual molestation as a child as was theorised at one time. And people who act on the belief that homosexuality is purely a lifestyle choice, very often end up doing great harm, whether wittingly or not. But more recently, especially in the West where legislation is no longer homophobic, there is a tendency towards what can only be described as socialised homosexuality, especially in young people who may be confused about their gender, despite lack of evidence for biological homosexuality or dual sexuality as in the case of Caster Semenya. But even in her case, self-describing herself as a woman was not a choice. She simply accepted herself as a woman and more recently as a woman with male chromosomes and testes. For that she deserves praise although she has suffered the penalty of not being allowed to compete in her preferred middle distance for which the Court of Arbitration in Sport ruled that she wielded an unfair advantage over other female athletes due to her surplus testosterone.

### **Spiritual Intelligence and Spiritual Hermaphroditism or Thinking with the Soul**

The hypothesis of this two-part article is that men are likely to be less spiritually intelligent than women, because they have not embraced their being created as spiritual hermaphrodites. If they are to redress this, they will need a Copernican Revolution in their gender identity leading to “resilience, happiness, compassion, satisfaction in life, forgiveness, empathy, communication skills, commitment, less emotional dysregulation and less aggression” (Pinto *et al* 2024: 12). In fact, as Richard Wolman argued, using the current theories of multiple intelligences, especially Howard Gardner’s *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983), each of us has a distinctive “spiritual intelligence” (Wolman 2001).

As noted earlier in part I of this article, men found the Covid-19 pandemic-engendered isolation more challenging than women. This was down to one male propensity: the need to be in control. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, nature was and men found it hard to deal with loss of control. We argued that the kind of non-productive and non-aggressive being they were being challenged to embrace was a step too far for their lower spiritual intelligence to grasp. Men were also being challenged to “the state or quality of being light-hearted or cheerful” or being gay, under non-Alpha male conditions. They needed to dig into their spiritual hermaphroditism, often dormant, which was already par for the course for most women.

As this research has revealed, most respondents did not consider spirituality as a form of intelligence although they were happy to list what they considered marks of spiritual intelligence. We surmise that it may well be that Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983) are unfamiliar still in the African University where most respondents were recruited from. Yet from a Judaeo-Christian perspective, illustrated by the aptly titled book by Richard Wolman, *Thinking with Your Soul: Spiritual Intelligence and Why it Matters*, spiritual intelligence may be described as “Thinking with your soul” (Wolman 2001), to which we may add, and not with genitalia (a feature not uncommon among male *homo sapiens*). Richard Wolman proposes the following definition:

Spiritual intelligence is the human capacity to ask ultimate questions about the meaning of life, and to simultaneously experience the seamless connection between each of us and the world in which we live (Wolman 2001: 83–84).

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the capacity to ask ultimate questions about the meaning of life and to simultaneously experience our connectedness to each other and the rest of creation — to think with the soul — goes back to the way the human prototype androgyne *Adam* is described in the account of creation recorded in Gen 2.

וַיִּצְרָן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה Then, the Lord *Elohim* formed a human prototype from the dust of the ground, and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life; and it became a living being (Gen 2:7 — my translation).

Perhaps the much-debated Latin aphorism by René Descartes, “*cogito ergo sum*” [I think, therefore I am] may actually have meant thinking with the soul, “*cogito anima ergo sum*” [I think with the soul, therefore I am], without the need to be precise where the self, soul, and mind are located in the body (cf. Anglin 2014: 105–116), as if they were distinct physical entities. It suffices that *Elohim* breathed into humanity and its androgynous *nephesh* [self, soul or mind] was enlivened. From that moment, humanity was wired to think androgynously, enabling it to collaborate with God as his viceroy and stewards of creation but somewhere along the line, like malware, toxic masculinity infected the androgynous soul.

## CONCLUSION

Part I defended the hypothesis that men were likely to be less spiritually intelligent or religious than women and thus less invested in collaborative stewardship of the cosmos. Part II has set out the case for spiritual hermaphroditism through a literary-linguistic-syntactic analysis and hermeneutics of suspicion of Gen 1:26–28 and 2:7, chosen for two reasons: These texts are often cited in support of patriarchy and binary gender — a combination that is unlikely to enhance men’s spiritual intelligence as spiritual hermaphrodites. The other is that the social location of this research, Zambia, a so-called Christian Nation, has a draconian penal code against homosexuality. Its default position on gender ambiguity is negative and needs a complete make over. Our conclusion is that being spiritually androgynous is embracing the opposite sex in our soul (unless you are already hermaphroditic), since we are created to be icons of a spiritually androgynous God who is male-female in order to be his viceroy on earth of collaborative stewardship of creation. It is humanity’s spiritual intelligence that enables collaborative stewardship of the cosmos — humanity’s main purpose for being created male-female, not procreation. The so-what question of the sceptic has serious implications for how we live out our quadruple set of relationships with self (whether straight, gay or intersex), others (especially the non-heterosexual), divinity and cosmos with joy or mirth, whether in the Church or in society. In her struggle to accept herself — her race to be herself — as a woman who is also a hermaphrodite, Caster Semenya models non-binary gender, sexuality and spiritual hermaphroditism for the rest of us by thinking with her soul where, ironically, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male [or] female; for all of [us] are one” (Gal 3:28 *NRSV*) to which we may add, there is no longer straight or gay. All that matters is being created *imago Dei* as a spiritual androgyne and a steward of the cosmos. In this sense, this writer’s former student, Kathy Bishop is right when she commented on the abstract of this article, “In my view Christ wouldn’t care about male or female but what lies in the heart whoever we are. So, anything else doesn’t matter and is purely academic (Kathy Bishop, Facebook post, 23 September 2024).

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A Google search for spiritual hermaphroditism is likely to return zero relevant result because it is the author’s coinage.

<sup>2</sup> The word hermaphrodite is used here without value judgement as a negative or pejorative condition. The more politically correct term in vogue is intersex, which introduces its own complexities.

<sup>3</sup> An Online news portal, *Yen*, lists Caster Semanya first on its list of the most famous intersex people in the world, Peris Walubengo Tatiana Thiga (19 August 2024), “Who are the most famous intersex people? A list of the top 15 most outspoken,” <https://yen.com.gh/facts-lifhacks/biographies/221860-who-famous-intersex-people-a-list-10-outspoken/> (Retrieved on 3 September 2024)

<sup>4</sup> According to Elizabeth Hartney, “Intersex births are more common than people think. A 2019 study in the *Journal of the Endocrine Society* suggests that 1.3 of every 1,000 babies are born with identifiable intersex traits. Other studies suggest that the actual intersex rate, whether readily identified or not, is closer to 2%.” Elizabeth

Hartney (9 January 2023), “What is Intersex? When sexual anatomy doesn’t align with the assigned sex,” *Verywellhealth*, <https://www.verywellhealth.com/what-is-intersex-21881> (Retrieved on 3 September 2024)

<sup>5</sup> Amy Morin (24 June 2024), “What is Toxic Masculinity?” *Verywellmind*, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-toxic-masculinity-5075107> (retrieved on 30 August 2024)

<sup>6</sup> *Quora*, “How do I stop thinking with my dick and start thinking with my brain?” <https://www.quora.com/How-do-I-stop-thinking-with-my-dick-and-start-thinking-with-my-brain> (Retrieved on 25 September 2024)

<sup>7</sup> In Hinduism, *Ardhanarishvara* is depicted as half-male and half-female, equally split down the middle. *Ardhanarishvara* represents the synthesis of masculine and feminine energies of the universe (*Purusha* and *Prakriti*).

<sup>8</sup> According to *Statistica*, at 95.5%, Zambia tops African countries with the highest share of Christians as of 2024, with Algeria, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia and Western Sahara (0%) coming last. Saifaddin Galal (29 May 2024), *Statistica*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1239389/share-of-christian-population-in-africa-by-country/> (Retrieved on 21 August 2024). The percentage of Christians in Zambia was corroborated by the 2010 Census of Population and Housing Report from the Central Statistical Office of Zambia as follows: In the 2010 census, 75.3% of Zambians were Protestant and 20.2% were other Christians. Catholic Church data would dispute the latter. Their statistics from 2005 show 26.8% Catholics.

<sup>9</sup> In par. 2, Pope John Paul cites Pope Paul VI to the effect that the Catholic Church “does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination.” Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration, *Inter Insigniores* on the question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood (15 October 1976): AAS 69 (1977), 100.

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