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Mary Daly

In his article on Mary, Daly, Stefon (2017) reveals that she is an “America theologian, philosopher, and ethicist who pioneered radical feminist theology” (para. 1). Born in 1928 and died in 2010, she was truly a prophetic witness to the detrimental forms and consequences of patriarchy. Stefon goes on to report that Daly was raised Roman Catholic, earned a PhD in Religion and studied both Thomist Theology and Medieval Theology, receiving two doctorates in both Philosophy and Theology. She more than advocated, but forbade males to attend some of her courses in an attempt to create an environment wherein females could be expressive and speak unhindered as witnesses to their experiences of subjugation. “In 1998 a male student backed by a [conservative](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conservative) political organization sued the college when Daly refused to admit him into one of her classes. The college dismissed her and revoked her [tenure](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tenure), spurring a bitter legal battle; it was settled in 2001, when Daly agreed to retire” (Stefan, 2017, para. 3).

Stefan (2017) goes on to share Daly carefully sought to dismantle through academia the various ways patriarchy as a male dominated principle of beliefs and traditions influenced systems, social institutions, and cultural forms. “Rejecting traditional [conceptions](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conceptions) of a [transcendent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transcendent) (and often male) God, Daly promoted a sense of the Absolute as a ‘Be-ing’ that was not only immanent but actualized through women’s creativity” (para. 4).

In *Mary Daly Biography*, it is also noted that Daly was not permitted to study philosophy in Catholic Colleges because of her gender which led to her seeking education where she would later earn her two PhDs in Switzerland, and a third in the United States in English. *Mary* (2017) reported that “she rapidly moved from “reformist” to “radical, post-Christian” feminist.” Daly’s recommendation that women both rename and reclaim a female-centered reality is central to her work.

During her education at Fribourg, she felt isolated and frustrated as she struggled to find comradery among the predominantly male population who refrained from engaging with her to avoid temptation (Boston, para. 5). It was during this time that she also began a budding contempt for the Church due to its violent history which included women and others, and Vatican II’s edicts. “Watching the veiled nuns shuffle to the altar rail to receive Holy Communion from the hands of a priest was like observing a string of lowly ants at some bizarre picnic” (Boston, para. 8). By 1966, Daly came back to the US and obtained a teaching position at Boston College. Some of her best known works are *The Church and The Second Sex, Beyond God the Father,* and *Re-Calling the Courage to Sin Big*.

What Mary Daly created was the dismantling of the “structures and myths within patriarchy which degrade all” and it allowed women to rethink their humanity in the ecclesiastical structure. The interpretation of the Virgin Mary and its unrealistic projection onto women as well as “racism, militarism, nationalism and environmental degradation” are outworkings of “phallic culture” (Boston, para. 17). She challenges all of us to learn what supports our need to relegate women to a position of servitude. Her belief that redemption is unattainable within a construct so set on the breakdown of the human species and environment that there is no other option but to develop a new kind of Being through incarnation of God’s essence (Boston, para. 21).

Mary Daly calls us (women) to a strong sense of agency. Her critique of Jesus as being human closely resonates with my heart. In *Beyond God the Father*, she writes, “I am proposing that Christian idolatry concerning the person of Jesus is not likely to be overcome except through the revolution that is going on in women’s consciousness” (p. 71). She calls us to take a long look inside for the answer as to what to do about patriarchy. This is where the greatest effects will come about. Conservative academia and ecclesia both perpetuate the notion that God incarnated God’s Self in the male form Jesus, and this leaves the feminine gender at a loss in terms of personal identification. The New Being she suggests is not intrinsically fortified by “the products of supermale arrogance” and is deeply invested in relieving one’s self from “enforced complicity in oppression” (p. 49, 71). Women participating in an awakening of conscience through belonging, recovery, meaning development, and thriving to Daly would be the fulfillment of “the second appearance of God incarnate” (p. 73).

Another point to be noted is her understanding of “the Antichrist” (p. 96). Daly posits that maybe this is not a created being at all, but a projection of patriarchal fear of women getting in touch with their divinity in such a way that they displace the need for male domination which would result in “spiritual awakening” (p. 96). What if women acted as their own saviors? These are the types of intriguing questions Daly left as her legacy for generations of women to become re-formed in their Beings in a self-efficacious way.

References

Daly, M. (1973). Beyond God the Father. North America, Canada.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mary-Daly> Stefan

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