



## The 60 Second Adventures in Religion

### *Religion as a mother*

#### **David Mitchell:**

Sixty second adventures in religion. Number three, religion as a mother.

Why do so many people picture God as a man? J J Bachofen was a Swiss Professor of Roman Law who was probably a bit of a mummy's boy.

He thought that religion was part of a process that began in the days before monogamy, when the only parent anyone could be absolutely certain of was their mother.

So when people tried to make sense of the mysteries of nature, it was only natural to attribute them to a motherly character; hence a widespread prehistoric religion based around motherhood.

But then men started to take more of a part in the family unit - hogging the remote control and indeed global control - so the idea of a nurturing goddess was soon replaced with a male god.

Logical though this sounds, there's no proof there ever was a widespread matriarchal religion. So either Bachofen was wrong, or those female gods were really good at cleaning up after themselves.

But his ideas has inspired others - including scientist James Lovelock with his Gaia hypothesis, that suggested you can better understand the whole biosphere of the Earth be seeing it as a single entity in a metaphorical female form.

But as for those ancient goddesses... well, mum's the word.