This book was first published by Fortress Press in 1985 with the same title. The present reissue has a long (ix–xxi) foreword by Phyllis Trible but is otherwise a reprint.

After a short preface (xxiii–xxiv), Terrien’s introduction (1–6) presents his subject: an attempt to glean from various biblical—Hebrew Bible and New Testament—texts a theology of manhood and womanhood. To quote the introduction’s concluding sentences,

Biblical faith, from Abraham to Jesus the Christ, lays the basis to a theology of manhood and womanhood that goes counter to the traditional attitudes and practices of Christendom and challenges the church of today to rethink critically not only the respective functions of both sexes but also the suprasexual meaning of the gender of God. (6)

Phyllis Trible, in a foreword that is an essay in its own right, salutes Terrien as a teacher and original thinker and points out how special—albeit not influential—this book was against the background of its first publication. Terrien (1911–2002) was an Old Testament/Hebrew Bible scholar who also ventured into the New Testament in order to construct a gender theology for his time and situation and context; moreover, since he had always been a believer in what became to be known as gender equality, he was
prepared to consider feminist opinions that, in his day, were “new-fangled.” Bringing in works by Frymer-Kensky, Schaberg, and Bird, Trible asks pertinent questions: Is Terrien’s book still valid? Is there a possibility for dialogue here with feminist critics since 1985? She answers her own question in the affirmative, and this reviewer concurs (see below). But first, a description.

Beyond his introduction, Terrien moves from Gen 1–3 (chs. 1–2 [7–27]) to their consideration against and with the song of songs (ch. 3 [29–49]) and the gender of God (ch. 4 [51–70]). Male and female as circumcised and pollutant are discussed in chapter 5 (71–86), and wisdom in chapter 6 (87–101). Chapters 7–12 constitute discussions of New Testament passages, proceeding from Wisdom/Wisdom of Solomon/Ben Sira to Sophia (ch. 7 [103–20]) to “Jesus, Woman, and the Fatherhood of God” in chapter 8 (121–42), men and women in the early church (ch. 9 [143–58]), Paul (ch. 10 [159–74]) and his followers (ch. 11 [175–98]), to a final chapter about “Man and Woman in Christianity” (ch. 12 [199–223]). Notes, a selected but copious and classified bibliography, and three indexes (passages, subjects, authors) complete the book (227–60).

Trible ably and sympathetically summarizes the project of this book: to show that, uniquely in the ancient Near East, and on the balance, both the “Old Testament” (sic) and the New advance a theology of manhood and womanhood that is unique in ascribing full humanity to both genders. In both Testaments, good beginnings of equality (stage one) seem to give way to a regression (stage two). In the third stage, misogyny and sexism emerge, whereas countervocies remain faintly present. As Trible states, Terrien never charted this analogy as precisely as this, but a parallel development seems to apply to his exposition (xiii–xiv).

This very Christian book is reviewed by this Jewish feminist reader. So how do I feel? Terrien’s readings are sharp and insightful, deceptively simple. Note for instance his first-level (“literal”) discussion of “The Tree of Absolute Knowledge” (22–24). But when he commences beyond the preliminary observations into its presumed theological statement, as for instance on pages 25–27, on “A Lust for Self-Deification,” I feel slightly lost. “No misogyny should be ascribed to the divine curses” (25)? I hardly agree, although some feminist readers, such as Carol Meyers, do agree, from a completely different readerly context. “The loss of the dimension of transcendence results in spoiling harmony between the sexes” (27)? I remain unconvinced. However, if I may take off from what Trible demonstrates in her foreword essay (as well as in her work, I might add), variations on Terrien’s formulations keep appearing in feminist biblical criticism until the present day.

I appreciate Terrien’s refusal to attribute more misogyny to the Hebrew Bible (hence to the emerging Judaisms) than to the New Testament (and emerging Christianities). His
wonderful collection *The Iconography of Job through the Centuries: Artists as Biblical Interpreters* (1996) is a firm favorite of mine. I also see that his *Job: Poet of Existence* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957) has been reissued recently (2004) as well. This is a mark of respect to a great scholar whose work deserves to accompany us, even and when his opinions are context bound and at times seem remote in place and concern. To this reader, his work still holds much appeal.