

I originally wrote *Fleeing Fundamentalism* as a history and commentary on the culture of American Fundamentalism, with merely a thread of memoir woven through it. However, publishers universally declared that it would be more marketable as a memoir. I resisted the notion for sometime, then eventually rewriting it as they'd suggested. It was painful to pare out most of the historical research, but did so with the idea that I would place portions of my academic work on a website. Below are selected segments from that research.

## **Research Appendix**

### **For *Fleeing Fundamentalism***

#### Chapter One

#### **The Farm**

Pg.16: During the 1970's, Hal Lindsey's book *The Late Great Planet Earth* took on mythic proportions with Fundamentalists. The theme of the book went something like this: In the book of Matthew, the parable of the fig tree referred to the return of the Jewish people to Israel in 1948. In the story, Jesus proclaimed that after the tree put forth its first leaves, he was "at the door," meaning the Second Coming was near. When Jesus added, "Truly I say unto you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place," Lindsey deduced that, since a biblical generation was forty years, Jesus would likely return before 1988. Hal Lindsay, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 53-54.

When asked why he thought the prophecies would come to pass during this generation, Lindsey stated, "The answer is simple. The prophets told us that the rebirth of Israel—*no other event*—would be the sign that the countdown has begun." Hal Lindsay, *Countdown to Armageddon*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 12.

Lindsey predicted that once the Jews returned to Israel in 1948, it touched off an ominous scenario that was clearly revealed in Scripture. A mighty enemy would soon rise up from the north and align itself with the foes of Israel. Lindsey proclaimed Russia as this powerful Northern enemy; its co-conspirators were Iran and the African nations. By attacking the Jewish nation, this "Northern Confederacy" would plunge the world into a final great war. Other events would consist of the Jews repossessing the ancient Mount site in Jerusalem and reconstructing the Temple; 200 million Chinese attacking Israel in the battle of Armageddon; and the Revived Roman Empire, which would birth the Antichrist, emerging as a ten-county confederation, or the European Common Market.

In the 1970's, rapture mania not only infiltrated the religious community, but also intrigued popular culture—so much so that for months the book remained on the *New York Times* best-seller list and spawned a major motion picture narrated by Orson Wells.

On page 80 of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Lindsey claimed: “We have seen that current events are fitting together into the precise pattern of predicted events. Israel has returned to Palestine and revived the nation. Jerusalem is under Israeli control. Russia has emerged as a great northern power and is the avowed enemy of revived Israel. The Arabs are joining in a concerted effort to liberate Palestine under Egyptian leadership. The black African nations are beginning to move from sympathy toward the Arabs to an open Alliance in their ‘liberation’ cause. It’s happening. God is putting it all together.”

Lindsey was not the only Fundamentalist leader to see the Jewish return to the land as critical to Jesus’ return. Jerry Falwell, founder of Liberty Baptist Bible College and the Moral Majority, pointed to the creation of the state of Israel as “the greatest single sign indicating the imminent return of Jesus Christ.” He saw May 14, 1948, as “the most important day in history since the ascension of Jesus into heaven.” *Fundamentalist Journal*, May 1988.

See: George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*. (New York and Oxford, 1980), 57-63, J.I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (July 1984)

Note: A few of Lindsey’s failed prophecies consisted of the following: Jesus did not return in the 1980’s, the Jewish people did not repossess the temple site and rebuild the Temple. The Soviet Union, the great enemy from the north, is no longer a threat to world peace. There is no united Africa supporting or assisting Russia in an invasion of Israel. Europe a.k.a. the Revived Roman Empire a.k.a. the beast with ten horns a.k.a. the European Common Market has twelve members and counting—not ten.

Today, Lindsay’s *Late Great Planet Earth* appears ridiculous. Most interesting about Lindsey’s Pre-millennial literalism is not that it utterly failed as prophecy—which of course, it did—but that his frequent vacillations between a literal and allegorical interpretation of the Bible never raised an eyebrow in Fundamentalism. One of the many examples of Lindsey’s switch from literal to figurative language can be found in his interpretation of Revelation nine, where he declared the 200 million soldiers to be real soldiers, but the 200 million horses represented some type of mechanized weapon. The gold crowns on the men’s heads symbolize some type of modern helmet, yet in the same passage, the angels opening the seals were literal celestial beings. Big Sky Bible College approached Bible interpretation in the manner of Lindsay, who said: “Take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.” Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 50.

Lindsey’s modern day apocalyptic approach to the book of Revelation, had its roots in the doctrinal system of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Englishman named John Nelson Darby. In 1850’s London, few people took Darby seriously, but during his six tours in the United States between 1859 and 1877, he found an enthusiastic following. Darby taught that there were no hidden or symbolic meanings in Scripture. Like an errorless legal document, the Bible was composed of facts: a millennium referred to ten centuries; the “seven day creation” meant precisely that. When the author of Revelations predicted a battle between Jesus and Satan on the plain of Armageddon outside Jerusalem, that was exactly what would happen.

Apparently, this literal interpretation was designed to make the Bible appear more

scientific during a time of emphasis on Enlightenment knowledge. During the late nineteenth-century man measured truth by its ability to reveal objective fact. Although quick to condemn science and the evolutionary theory, this new view of the Bible molded its reading of Scripture with the empirical methods fashioned during the Enlightenment. In the past, the church had relied on mysticism, intuition, and liturgy rather than detail finding to interpret Biblical texts.

Darby divided history into seven epochs, or dispensations. A dispensation ended when God became so disgusted with humanity that He decided to punish it. Previous epochs had concluded in catastrophes such as the Fall, the Flood, and the Crucifixion of Christ. Humanity was now in the sixth dispensation, which God was about to end in unparalleled disaster. After Christians were “raptured” the Antichrist (Satan or the Beast), a false redeemer, would arise from the East to deceive the world and inflict a seven-year period of Tribulation.

Back on the cursed earth, the Antichrist would wage war against humanity by persecuting and massacring all who opposed him. At the end of the seven years, Christ would descend to defeat the Antichrist during the battle of Armageddon outside Jerusalem. The victory would inaugurate the Seventh Dispensation, or thousand-year reign. During this millennium period, Christ would rule the earth and upon its completion bring history to a close with the Last Judgment. Darby’s view represented a novel twist called pre-millennialism, because Christians would be snatched from the earth before the millennium. For centuries, theologians had interpreted Bible prophecy as either history or allegory. Now Fundamentalist Christians set out to interpret the Bible’s allegory, numbers, and symbols into literal events.

Previous interpretations of the Book of Revelations were mainly divided into two categories: the historical and the allegorical.

The historical theory claimed that events described in Revelation had occurred shortly after John wrote the book, and referred to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70AD. Since these predictions had already taken place and there would be no thousand-year reign, this view was also called amillennialism (no-millennialism).

The allegorical interpretation, which had been formulated by liberal Protestants, taught that Christians would usher in the Kingdom of God through their own humanistic efforts. This view was often equated with the social gospel because when, through social action, the earth had turned to Christ, the millennium would be inaugurated. Once this occurred, Jesus would return to earth and reign. Whereas the liberal, *post*-millennial Protestant saw the wording of the prophetic books as symbolic and counted on the goodness of man to prevail, Darby’s literal, *pre*-millennialism was the pessimistic opposite.

But Darby’s approach differed significantly to both. He claimed that the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation contained details that would soon come to pass. Pre-millennialism taught that instead of growing more virtuous, man was becoming so corrupt that God would be forced to intervene and judge society again. And rather than Christ returning once the millennium had been established, it claimed that he would appear before the millennium, leaving the unsaved to face seven years of unspeakable horror.

In *Battle for the Mind*, William Sargant claims that intense fear is an effective method of coercion common in political brain washing, voodoo rites, and religious

revivalism. Once fear, anger, or other strong emotions are intensified in a devotee they are vulnerable to persuasion. In Christian Fundamentalism eternal hellfire is an effective vehicle for such indoctrination.

## Chapter Two

# Bible College

Pg 25 Interpreting Scripture literally or as “God-breathed words” was a major cornerstone in propelling Christian Fundamentalism into existence. John Nelson Darby’s literal interpretation of the Bible soon became a championed by a group of Christians who were out to combat the theological movement that had appeared in the late eighteenth century called Higher Criticism. Higher Criticism emerged in Germany where scholars applied the new techniques of literary analysis, archaeology, and comparative linguistics to the Bible (also objectifying the Bible with Enlightenment empiricism, but coming up with a very different outcome than fundamentalists). They argued that it’s first five books, traditionally attributed to Moses, were written much later and by a number of different authors; the book of Isaiah had at least two different sources, and King David had probably not written the Psalms.

In 1872, seven Anglican clergymen published *Essays and Reviews*, which made the findings of Higher Criticism available to the general public. The conservatives fought back. Conservative seminaries set out to defend “Biblical Literalism.” In 1873, Charles Hodge, chair of theology at Princeton, published his two-volume *Systematic Theology* insisting on the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. In 1878, Charles’ son, Archibald, wrote in *The Princeton Review* that every story and statement in it was “absolutely errorless and binding for faith and obedience.” In 1886, the revivalist Dwight Moody (1837-99) founded the Moody Bible Institute to create a cadre of young zealots to combat Higher Criticism. He envisioned teaching them the basics or “fundamentals of the faith” so they could return to their churches and challenge liberal teachings. Moody is often called the father of American fundamentalism for championing the idea of Biblical literalism. After the success of Moody Bible Institute, Bible colleges sprang up across the United States to prepare Christian young people for the counteroffensive against modernity.<sup>4</sup> In 1930, 50 fundamentalist Bible colleges existed in the United States. By 1975, when I stepped onto the campus of Big Sky Bible College and Mr. Foreman’s class, there were over 100.

See: *Inspiration*,” Princeton Review 2, April 11, 1881. Also: In the *Christian Workers Magazine*, E. A. Wollam wrote, “I believe the time has come when the evangelistic forces of this country, primarily the Bible Institutes, should not only rise up in defense of the faith, but should become a united and offensive power.” Cited in Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (University, Alabama 1982), 90-91. See Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, Knopf, New York, 2000).

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Lord's Work**

Page 41: During the thirty years war, Austrian and Turkish armies plundered Hutterite farms, raped their women, and murdered their men. The commune fled eastward, where Jesuits confiscated their belongings, baptized their infants, and forced adult conversion to the Catholic church.

In 1770, Catherine the Great offered them sanctuary because she was seeking skilled farmers to settle the vast lands of the Ukraine. One hundred years later, the Russians withdrew their promise of non-conscription and demanded that they serve in the Russian army. As a consequence, they fled to the American west. By 1877, the Hutterites, which numbered about 400, had settled in the Dakota Territory. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, their pacifism would bring them more persecution.

When WWI began, Americans viewed them as pro German and their cattle and sheep were often stolen. The government drafted them and when they showed up, they were singled out for harsh treatment. As a result of the draft, the colonies migrated into Canada, settling on the plains of Alberta and Manitoba. Then in 1942, Alberta passed a law to prevent the sale of Canadian land to “enemy aliens and Hutterites.” After WWII and the conscientious objector laws that were passed, many of them moved back into the United States. By the 1970's, hundreds of colonies in America peppered the prairies of North America. The colony we were about to enter was the oldest in the state of Montana. It had been started in 1911.

## **Chapter Five**

### **A New Life**

Page 91. See also in Tim and Beverly LaHaye, *The Act of Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 15. See: Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, (Ballantine Books, January 30, 2001).

Beverly had organized the Concerned Women of America in 1979, after hearing Barbara Walters interview feminist leader Betty Friedan on television. LaHaye took issue with Friedan's contention that she was speaking for a great many American women when she embraced feminism. Instead, LaHaye claimed that, “the feminists' anti-God, anti-family rhetoric did not represent my beliefs, nor those of the vast majority of women.” See also Beverly LaHaye, *The Restless Woman*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 54, 126 as cited in Karen Armstrong *The Battle for God*, 312.

## Chapter Six

# Calvary Baptist

See page: 101: In 1609, the issue of baptism gave birth to the denomination. The movement began when pastor John Smyth and his flock separated from the Church of England over the doctrine of baptism. Smyth objected to infant baptism, which placed a baby under the covenant and immediately into the church family. He insisted that baptism should not be performed until a mature individual became a believer. Only then, after a profession of faith, could the rite take place, symbolizing mature union with the church. At first, the sect baptized converts by sprinkling them with water. But in 1640, they began immersing believers, or as the First London Confession of Particular Baptists decreed in 1644, they were "plunging the whole body under water." Since immersion uniquely characterized this new group, the baptismal took on great significance. Today in Baptist churches across the world, it continues to loom large.

## Chapter Seven

# The Inferno

Page 136: I also began to wonder how an errorless, authoritative Scripture could be reconciled with Paul's own claims in II Corinthians 2:11 that, "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in boasting." In I Corinthians Paul also apologetically explains that what he is about to say is from himself and not God. "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord."

I also had to consider the fact that the Christian church never possessed the original documents for long. The apostle's letters were written on extremely perishable material that only lasted a few years. After that, the task of saving the ideas were left to first century copyists. Today we possess thousands of copies that differ greatly. As conservative Christian apologist Norman Geisler admits, "The multiplicity of manuscripts produces a corresponding number of variant readings. For the more manuscripts that are copied, the greater will be the number of copied errors. . . in the New Testament there are over 200,000 variants in some 5,000 manuscripts." Norm Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 252, 360.

For example, Mark 16:18, claims that Christians can, "Take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." This section in the Bible is not to be found in the two most reliable early manuscripts. The verses remain in every modern translation, however.

Fundamentalism stands firm, and bases all of its teaching, on the idea that the

moral climate of the modern world exactly reflects that of the first century, when God breathed the New Testament from heaven into the writings of the apostles. Today, the two thousand year old document holds "all answers to faith and practice." Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1976) p. 29.

But under a historical magnifying glass the Bible began to lose its unblemished glow. Objective research revealed that the Bible, in all versions, was simply a group of writings that Orthodox priests, 400 years after Jesus' death, chose from a plethora of ancient Christian manuscripts. And these letters had been copied profusely and were countless copies away from the originals, which had not existed for hundreds of years. The authentic New Testament documents had never resided as a cohesive book. When I consulted fundamentalism on the subject even conservative Christian apologist Josh McDowell wrote, "We don't exactly know what criteria the early church used to choose the canonical books." And McDowell's "early church" was not the apostle's first century band, but the Roman church of 380AD.

And this god-breathed document had been used to justify almost every act of imperial conquest, torture and coercion in history, every new regime or sect changing Biblical mandate to suit its agenda.

During the Spanish Inquisition, Christians used Matthew, Thessalonians, John, and Acts to hold the Jewish nation responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. It persecuted and killed Jews, accusing them of kidnapping children for blood rituals, poisoning water, and stealing consecrated communion bread to desecrate the body of Christ. It excluded them from public office, denied them, and forbid them to own property.

During the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, the church used Isaiah, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Exodus to justify the imprisonment, torture and murder of an estimated 300,000 women as witches. From Scripture it created *The Witch's Hammer*, an official document which came into wide use in the late 1500's. The Hammer gave specifications for finding witches, tortures designed to exact confession, and procedures for sentencing and execution.

During the Protestant Reformation, Anabaptists cited the book of Acts to separate from the church and require adult baptism by submersion. Protestant Reformers Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli countered with Old Testament law and demanded the Anabaptists be drowned or beheaded for their heresy. The books of Isaiah and Matthew were used to justify the Thirty-Years War, along with most other aggressive Christian onslaughts in history.

Religious leaders used the Bible to teach slaves not to challenge their masters and to willingly accept punishment. In the late eighteenth century the Reverend William Graham, rector of Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia promoted slavery using Exodus 21 as a justification for modern day slavery. In the passage in which God gives detailed instructions on how to treat slaves.

Full citations are as follows: Christians have used Matthew 27:22, 25, I Thessalonians 2:14-15, John 8:44, Acts 7:51-52, to hold the Jewish nation responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. During the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, the church used the Old Testament verses of: Isaiah 8: 19-20; 47:13; Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-11; Exodus 22:18 to justify the imprisonment, torture and murder of an estimated 300,000 women as witches.

The Bible instructs us how to treat slaves in I Peter 2:21; Col. 3:22; Col. 4:1; Eph. 6:5.

Biblical verses demanding capital punishment are: for those who work on the Sabbath—Exodus 31:15; commit adultery—Leviticus 20:13; don't respect their parents—Leviticus 20:13; are gluttons or drunkards—Deuteronomy 21:18-23; and masturbate—Genesis 38:7-10).

To forbid the drinking of wine, Christians have used Proverbs 20:1, 31:4-5; Isaiah 28:7; to justify imbibing, Isaiah 25:6, Matthew 26:26-29, John 2:9-11, To forbid work on Sundays, Exodus 16:23, 20:8-10; to promote work on Sundays, Matthew 12:1-3, Mark 2:27-28; to oppose war Luke 6:35, Isaiah 2:4, Matthew 5:9, 26:52; to justify war. Exodus 15:3, Ecclesiastes 3:8. Leviticus 18:22 has been used to condemn homosexual relations while I Samuel 18:1, 3-4 has been cited to argue that

David's love for Jonathan could well have been sexual. The Catholic Church used I Corinthians 7:1; 25-26; Matthew 19:10; 12, to support the celibacy of priests. Christians opposed to unmarried clergy, have cited I Corinthians 7:1-2; I Timothy 3:2; 4:1-5; and Titus 1:5-6. ; to justify prayer in public schools I Timothy 2:8, I Thessalonians 5:17; to forbid prayer in public schools Matthew 6:5-8, Ecclesiastes 5:2.

Over the ages the church has used I Kings 14:24 and Jude 7 to define and punish homosexual activity. Genesis 38:7-10; Romans 6:12-13 and Leviticus 15:16-17 has been used to forbid masturbation and Exodus 20:13, 21:22; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:41-42 to oppose abortion.

Leviticus 20:9; Proverbs 13:24, 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; Psalms 127:3 and Colossians 3:21 have been used to justify physical punishment of children. I Corinthians 11: 4-6, 13-15, I Timothy 2:9-10, Deuteronomy 22:5 to regulate what women wear.

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I also discovered that the Bible often contradicted itself: In II Kings states that Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began his reign, while in II Chronicles 36:9 says he was eight years old. In II Kings 8:26 Ahaziah is twenty-two years old when he began his reign, while II Chronicles. 22:2 says he was forty-two. Acts 7:14 claims that 75 people went down to Egypt with Jacob, while the Old Testament references of Exodus 1:5, Deuteronomy 10:22 and Genesis 46:27 list 70. I Kings 4:26 says there were 40,000 stalls, while the same account in II Chronicles 9:25 cites 4,000 stalls. II Samuel 8:4 says 700 horsemen, while the same account in I Chronicles. 18:4 says 7,000. In identical stories, II Samuel 24:9 reports that 800,000 men drew the sword, while in I Chronicles 21:5 lists 1,100,000 men. The Old Testament also disagrees as to how Saul died. I Sam. 31:4 says that he killed himself. II Sam 21:12 says that a Philistine killed him; and II Sam 1:10 says that an Amalekite murdered him.

James 1:13 states that God tempts no man, while Genesis 22:1 claims He tempted Abraham. II Sam 24:1 states that the Lord moved David to number Israel, while I Chronicles 21:1 states that Satan provoked David to number Israel.

There is also a conflict as to how Judas died. Matthew 27:5 says he hanged himself, while Acts 1:18 says he purchased a field with the pieces of silver and as he fell headlong he burst in the midst and his bowels gushed out.

Fundamentalists attempt to dodge this question by declaring that some of Paul's writing is "cultural" and can not be applied to the modern church (i.e. the Corinthian passage concerning hat wearing). However, literalists point to verses in the same book (I Corinthians 7:10-17), written to the same church in the same circumstances, and hold modern Christianity hostage to Paul's criteria for divorce. But it suddenly it seemed obvious that this made no sense; everything Paul wrote was "cultural" and if we are going to apply some of it to the 21<sup>st</sup> century church, we are bound to it all.

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **The Goddess versus the Word of God**

There is great disagreement in the academic community as to the place of Goddess religion in prehistoric times. Because there are no written accounts of early human history, much has been left up to educated, yet conflicting, guess. The research I performed focused around recent scholarship in the area of early pagan religion. Because the issue is hotly debated and without traditional historical sources (i.e. written primary source documents), I simply offer my research and my conjecture as to how Hebrew culture and the Goddess collided.

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The Old Testament reveals that Abram (later renamed Abraham), father of the Hebrew people, left Ur and traveled to the land of Canaan. Although we don't have any contemporary record of Abram, scholars think he was probably one of the wandering chieftains who swooped down from Mesopotamia into the Mediterranean around 1,800

BCE. These nomads spoke West Semitic languages, of which Hebrew is one. When the Hebrews arrived in Canaan it was inhabited by a "very powerful people," and the towns were vast and strongly fortified. (Numbers 13:28) God commanded the Israelites to drive the indigenous people out and to "destroy their altars, break their images and cut down their groves, for thou shalt worship no other god, for the Lord whose name is Jehovah is a jealous God." (Exodus 34: 11-16).

Throughout the Old Testament, the Jews are busy fulfilling God's ambitious mandate to wipe out these cultures. In Deuteronomy 3, God delivered the king of Bashan and his people into the hands of Moses who, "slaughtered them and left no survivor." Moses went on to ravage sixty cities where he put to death all of the men, women and children in every city.

Deuteronomy 3:3-7: In Makkedah they killed, "all the people in it . . . letting none escape" In Hazor, "they exterminated them; they did not spare a soul." To destroy Ai, the Israelites set the town afire. When the inhabitants fled into the countryside, they hunted them down and murdered them all. They impaled the king on a stake and later that evening threw his corpse at the entrance of the city gate. Once they achieved complete annihilation, they torched what remained. First however, "the Israelites took the cattle and the spoil of the city as their booty, in accordance with the instructions that the Lord had given Joshua." In the end Joshua, massacred the population of the whole region—the hill country, the Negeb, the Shepalah, the watersheds—and all their kings. He left no survivor, destroying everything that drew breath, as the Lord the God of Israel had commanded. Joshua 10:30,11:14, 8:24-29

Joshua took over where Moses left off. After looting all of the gold, copper, and iron from the people of Jericho, the tribe, "destroyed everything in the city; they put everyone to the sword, men and women, young and old." (Joshua 6:21) The warrior chief and his clan burned a total of 31 Canaanite cities. The biblical writer insisted that God not only blessed the slaughter but demanded it. Jehovah ordered His people to "utterly destroy" the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites. (Deuteronomy 20:17) The Israelites named their God *Yahweh Sabaoth*, "the god of the armies." His ferocity was indeed extraordinary and his genocidal mandate was frequent (Deuteronomy. 3:3-7; Ezekiel 9:4-7, Numbers 31:17; Deuteronomy 12:2,3; 21:10-14)

In other instances, the Lord allowed a concession—animals and virgin girls. Sometimes the Israelite warriors were ordered to save "every woman who has not had intercourse." At Midian, the Bible lists this "virginal booty" of 32,000 young women with sheep, cattle, and asses. The Hebrew God then commanded his people to shave the girls' heads and give them a month to mourn the death of their families, after which time their conqueror/husbands could have sex with them. If the girl did not please her husband, he could let her go—or by implication cast her off. The only thing he could not do was sell her. (Numbers 31:32-35; Deuteronomy 21:10-14).

In the end, these marriages caused the Jewish God much grief because the girls brought their pagan religions along with them. In the Old Testament, Jehovah constantly appealed to the Israelites to abandon such foreign gods (Jeremiah 44). The women, very possibly the once virgin spoil, responded to the prophet, "when we offer incense to the *Queen of Heaven* and pour libations in her honor, do you think we make cakes for her

with her features on them without our husband's knowledge? The Hebrew men had begun to worship these new deities alongside their pagan wives. Even King Solomon was reprimanded and threatened with the loss of his kingdom if he continued to pay homage to the Queen of Heaven and Ashtoreth of the Sidonians. In Judges, Samuel and Hosea we read that the people "forsook the Lord and worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth."<sup>99</sup>Judges 2:13, 3:7; Samuel 7:3,4, Hosea 2.

In the book of Hosea, God used a real life metaphor to make an example of this "unfaithfulness." To illustrate how his people were constantly drawn to the pagan religion of the area, Jehovah appointed the prophet Hosea to marry the temple priestess Gomer. Even though Hosea loved Gomer and was faithful to her, she left him to serve in the temple and have ceremonial sex with other men. In like manner, the Bible tells us Yahweh grieved over the adultery of his people. The Bible gives us a glimpse into this forbidden worship when God declares: I will put an end to all her rejoicing, her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths and all her solemn feasts. I mean to make her pay for all the days when she offered burnt offerings to the baals and decked herself with rings and necklaces to court her lovers, had to endure the idolatry of his people and call them back from such foreign influences.

Who was this foreign god that caused Yahweh such torment? Anthropological research suggests that the foreign god was in fact a Goddess and Her ancient rites of worship originated during the Neolithic and Paleolithic periods. Evidence of these matrilineal societies appears in the archeological record beginning about 9,000 BCE. Since World War II, a number of remarkable technological breakthroughs, such as radiocarbon, or C-14, and the endochronological methods of dating by the girth of trees, have vastly increased our grasp of the past. Even in the last few decades, researchers have discovered much about the people of the Ancient Near East. see: Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987); Maria Gimbutas, *The Goddess and Gods of Old Europe* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982); James Mellart, *The Neolithic of the Near East* (New York: Scribner, 1975); James Mellart, *Catal Hyuk* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967); Merlin Stone, *When God was a Woman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1948); H.W.F. Sagg, *The Greatness that was Babylon* (New York: Mentor, 1968); R.K. Harrison, *Ancient World* (Edinburgh: English Universities Press, Ltd., 1971)

The Bible depicts these cultures as barbaric and Christians are told that Jehovah had justification for this slaughter. These Goddess worshippers were so corrupt that Jehovah was merely protecting his children from pagan sin and disease. However, modern archeological evidence challenges this notion. In his book *The Canaanites*, John Gray writes, "With great indignation and broad generalization 'the abomination of the Canaanites' are stigmatized by Hebrew prophets, reformers and editors of the Old Testament." These atrocities "refer to one element—sexual license."

Scholars also agree that biblical condemnation of Philistine culture is just as incomplete and deceiving. Archeological excavations indicate that the Philistines were not barbarous or culturally deficient, as we have adopted from the biblical writings into the vernacular.

In the 70's University of California archeologist Gimbutas cataloged and analyzed

thousands of Neolithic findings that recalled the days of Goddess worship. In Catal Huyuk, Crete, the worship of the Goddess permeated all aspects of life.

11In discussing the Philistine people, whose land would later be named Palestine after them, Professor R.K. Harrison writes, "Archaeological excavations in Philistine territory have shown that it is clearly a mistake to regard the Philistines as synonymous with barbarity or cultural deficiency, as is so frequently done in common speech."

Instead they enjoyed a thriving agricultural trade (the Philistine city of Ekron produced at least 500 tons of olive oil each year, making it the largest oil production center uncovered so far in the ancient world). They ran a prosperous business of manufacturing silver and precious stone jewelry and pottery. These indigenous people developed sophisticated political systems and cities filled with architectural marvels. Researchers have discovered complex religious sanctuaries where the Goddess was worshipped.

In the Philistine city of Ekron, archeologist found a pillared sanctuary. On the cella, the holy of holiest, an inscription to the Goddess read: "The temple which he build, kys, son of Padi, son of Ysd, son of Ada, son of Ya'ir, ruler of Ekron: For Ptgyhhis lady. May she bless him and protect him and prolong his days, and bless his land." Ekron, A Philistine City, Jewish Virtual Library, [www.us-israel.org/jsource/Archaeology/Ekron](http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Archaeology/Ekron), pg. 2.

The biblical Philistine and Canaanite Goddess worshippers had lived in the Fertile Crescent for thousands of years. Even as far back as 6000 BCE they had created a complex social organization involving craft specialization. They raised wheat, barley, vetch, peas, and other legumes, domesticated animals and developed advanced pottery and copper metallurgy. They constructed complex buildings and sea going vessels and vastly expanded trade and communication throughout the area.

Excavations at Catal Huyuk, inhabited from approximately 5700 to 5000 BCE on the Cilician plains of Anatolia, reveal a remarkably advanced civilization with an art center that included paintings, plaster reliefs, and stone sculptures. A large part of their art consisted of tributes to the Goddess. Scholars have discovered a proliferation of figurines showing the Goddess in her three aspects, as a young woman, mother giving birth, and as an old woman.

As human culture evolved from nomadic to agricultural, its sense of the divine evolved as well. Both the mythology and art of these ancient people celebrated the rejuvenating power of the female. Neolithic society credited a female Goddess with the creative power over of the earth. She personified nature and permeated ancient art. Early agrarian culture erected shrines to the Mother Goddess, which acted as social and economic centers, as well as holy places. These hubs developed into future cities. Archeologist Mellaart writes of this period, "Art makes its appearance in the form of animal carvings and statuettes of the supreme deity, the Mother Goddess."

Archeologist and Professor of Semitic Languages H.W.F. Sagge, reported that figurines in clay of the Mother Goddess "seem to have been the central figure in Neolithic religion." The emerging agriculturist lifestyle freed people for craft making, such as pottery, basket weaving, wood and stone carving, and upon these works of art they painted symbols rich in meaning. In shrines and houses, on wall paintings and decorative motifs, on vases and sculptures the Goddess appears.

For these early people, She wielded power to govern the world. Because they

associated the magic of creation with the miracle of birth they attributed the earth's regenerating process to the feminine. She gave them life, provided material and spiritual nurture, and even in death took them back into her cosmic womb. These matrilineal societies passed on their family names, titles, possessions and territorial rights through the female line.

Joseph Campbell declared that in these societies, "women showed themselves supreme; they were not only the bearers of children but also the chief producers of food. By realizing that it was possible to cultivate, as well as to gather, they had made the earth valuable and they became consequently, its possessors. Thus they won both the economic and social power and prestige." Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live By* (New York: Bantam Books).

Archeologists have discovered this deification of a female Goddess in three main origins of agriculture: Asia Minor and southeastern Europe, Thailand in Southeast Asia, and in native cultures in America. Her name is the Great Maiden, Ancestress or Creatrix, the Lady of the Waters, Birds, and Underworld, or simply the Divine Mother cradling her child, the Mother who gives birth to Heaven and Earth: Giver of Law, Justice and Mercy.

A similar picture has emerged in sites at Halaf, which flourished during 5000 BC, where holy places dedicated to the Goddess were discovered as well as houses that contained sacred corners, altars, and offering places. These monuments were called asherah—a place worshippers paid tribute to the Goddess Ashtoreth. The pillar was often a fig tree and was considered the "Body of the Goddess on Earth." In many myths, the tree was regarded as the Goddess' gift to mankind. Evidence suggests that they were the fig trees described in Egyptian texts as "the flesh and fluid of the Goddess Hator," and its fruit may have been eaten as a type of communion in Goddess rituals. Anthropologist Gimbutas writes "Wherever your turn, pillars and symbols remind one of the presence of the Great Goddess." At the Shrine of Eleusis, the fig tree represented the Goddess' power. The Goddess Dionysus was also symbolically associated with the fig tree.

Snakes also personified the Goddess. Early cultures believed the serpent embodied Her spiritual energy which was manifest in divine wisdom and rejuvenation. Throughout Babylon, Egypt, Crete, and Greece, the area in which the Hebrews would invade, the Canaanite Goddess Ashtoreth, or Astarte, was associated not only with the fig tree but also the snake who represented the wisdom of the great Mother. In Sumeria, the snake Goddess Nidaba's name meant "Learned One of the Holy Chambers." Babylonian tablets reveal that the Goddess Ishtar sat upon the royal throne of heaven and, holding a serpent-entwined scepter, ruled as prophetess and visionary. In Crete sacred Goddess snakes proliferated in temple sanctuaries. They appear in such numbers that archeologists call the Cretan goddess the Snake Goddess. In Egypt, the female Cobra Goddess was known as Ua Zit or "Creatrix of the World." She represented the symbol of mystic insight and wisdom. Deities and Egyptian royalty wore the snake's image upon their foreheads. Later manifestations of the Cobra Goddess evolved into Hathor and Maat, known as the all-seeing Eye. In Greece, the serpent always accompanied Athena as it peered from beneath Her great bronze shield or stood by Her side. Even into classical Greek the priestess Pythia, sat upon a tripod stool around which a python coiled. Most likely the Philistines, from ancient Crete, brought the Serpent Goddess to Cyprus and Canaan, believing she manifest mystic wisdom. Both the Hebrew and Arabic terms for magic

derive from the word snake. Today the snake symbol still represents knowledge and wisdom as it wraps itself around the doctor's staff.

Another attribute unique to these Goddess worshippers was their celebration of sexual union. For millennia in Sumer, Babylon, and Canaan, priestesses had lived within the temple complex. They resided there to have sexual intercourse with those coming to pay homage to the Goddess—a sacred religious rite representing union with Her life-giving energy. Early culture deemed these rites a commemoration of love and procreation. More importantly, they believed such sacraments connected humanity to the fundamental rhythms of life. The Goddess was immanent and experiential. The notion that these ceremonies held negative ethic implications did not occur to Neolithic people who had not developed systems of sexual morality. Procreation represented part of the divine movement of life and when humans mingled with the energy of the Mother Earth they came away rejuvenated.

In Old Europe the physical and cultural disruption of the Goddess worshippers seems to have begun in the fifth millennium BCE, when invaders swooped down from the north. With this invasion the Bronze Age of Metallurgy began. "Thanks to the growing number of radiocarbon dates, it is now possible to trace several migratory waves of steppe pastoralists that swept across prehistoric Europe." Later incursions, culture shocks, and population shifts were concentrated in three major thrusts: Wave No. 1; at c. 4300-4200 BCE; Wave No. 2, c. 3400-3200 BCE; and Wave No. 3, c. 3000-2800 BCE (dates are calibrated to dendochronology).

These nomadic, herdsman were organized in tribes. Along with bronze weapons of destruction, the marauders also brought a new form of religion which introduced the worship of a young warrior god or supreme father god. Soon a pattern of amalgamation of the two theologies emerged in the archeological record. Although the Goddess survived, she was forced to share her deity with male gods. New myths appear with gods and goddess vying for power. The male God married the Goddess and the couple became partners.

This process allowed the triumphant invader to incorporate their gods into the history of the conquered people. As with the Storm God Taru and the Sun Goddess Arinna, the Greek Zeus and Hera, and the Caananite Baal and Astoreth, God's and Goddess' merged their power. Pushing into the land, the Indo-Europeans incorporated the Snake/Goddess/wisdom image into their emerging myths—symbolizing the defeat of the old order but also a compromise into the new. In the ancient times, this customary "remything" was a common and acceptable practice to establish new authority.

When the Assyrians overthrew Babylon and brought their God Ashur with them, Assyrian priests simply took old Babylonian tablets and recopied them, substituting the name of their own God for that of Marduk. The work wasn't carefully executed, however, and in some places the name of Marduk still creeps in. In some legends God emerged as a rebellious young man, who heroically destroyed the older female deity. In Sumeria Enlil raped the Goddess Ninlil. In India, Indra, male Lord of the Mountains, dueled the Goddess Danu. In Greek legend Zeus fought the serpent Typhon (son of the Goddess Gaia), Apollo defeated the serpent Python (son of Gaia), and Hercules killed the serpent Ladon (who guarded the sacred fruit tree of the Goddess Hera).

In the wave of the last invaders came the Semitic Hebrews—later called the Jews. Unlike most of those who came before them however, the Jewish Sky God refused to

share power with the Earth Goddess. Rather than blending, the Hebrews set out to destroy the indigenous religion and replace it with the singular Jehovah.

Their creation myth story set out to accomplish this goal. In Genesis we read that the serpent, a prophetic and oracular symbol of the Goddess, cunningly advises Eve to disobey the male God Yahweh. Eve takes counsel from the serpent, and is tricked into believing she will receive divine knowledge. The snake then promises to open her eyes to good and evil, precisely the job it served the Goddess in Babylon, Egypt, Crete, Canaan, and Greece.

Eve took the fruit from the tree—another representation of the Goddess Ashtoreth's life-giving sustenance. Once the transgression occurred, Adam and Eve covered their nakedness with fig tree leaves. In their fallen state, they gained the understanding of sexual pleasure and procreation—possibly a parallel with the celebration of the sexual act performed in the Goddess temples. After the couple had been enlightened by the snake, Jehovah cursed both the snake and the couple.

The Hebrew God then informed the serpent that He would put "enmity" between it and the woman. He went on to afflict Eve with pain in childbearing and subject her to the rule of man. Yahweh pronounced that from that point on her husband would "rule over her."

The Genesis story ushered in a new era for women. Whereas in the matrilineal societies, females held equal power with men, the Hebrews treated women as property. A woman's value was in direct proportion to her success at producing offspring. If she could not bear children, the Israelite man was free to divorce her (Israelite woman never had that option). If she did not enter into marriage as a stainless vehicle for her husband's prodigy, her use to Jewish society had ended. Without apology, Israelite law made this clear. On a girl's wedding night, if her husband found that she was not a virgin, she was stoned to death. (Deut. 22:20-22; Leviticus 20:10. Lev. 21:9)

If an Israelite man raped a virgin girl, it was considered a declaration of ownership and forced their marriage. As the victim of rape, the woman automatically lost her right to be single or marry anyone but her rapist. The rapist's only obligation was to give the girl's father a proper wedding gift and not divorce her. When an engaged virgin was raped, Levitical law demanded that the girl be stoned to death along with her rapist. The crime was considered an affront to the male who owned her. The law also declared such a rape an offense against the girl's father because it robbed him of the money he would have received upon her marriage (Deut. 22:23-25; 28-29) Having sex with a married woman constituted a crime equal to murder and required death for both offenders (Lev. 20:10; Exodus 20:14)

The issue was not one of extramarital sex, which was openly tolerated in other circumstances. A Hebrew man could collect as many women as he could economically afford (Genesis 30:15; Deut. 21:15; cf. Gen 29:30-31) The adulterous act was considered defilement of property. Unfaithfulness violated the fundamental and exclusive right of a man to the sexuality of his wife. The adulterer robbed the husband of his essential honor, while the wayward wife mocked her husband's authority, offering her sexuality to another man. If a woman did her duty to Jewish society by giving birth to children, performing years of domestic service, and adding to the value of the home and property, still she had no legal right or claim to any of the family's possessions. She could be handed a notice of divorce and be cast off at any time. The husband then assumed full

ownership of all she produced in the years as his spouse and, if he had not already done so, could replace her with another wife—or two (Deut. 24:1)

Since Jewish women were dependent for their support upon their fathers before marriage and their husbands afterward, divorced women were destitute. If a wife dodged all of these potential disasters, she could still be doomed. A woman received no inheritance, so when her husband died, all of his property went to the eldest son. If a woman had no sons, her husband's wealth passed to his nearest male relative. The Old Testament placed women on the level of a man's major possessions beside slaves, livestock and war plunder (Exodus 20:17; Deut 20:14; Deut. 21: 10-14)

Removing women from the exalted position they held in Goddess religion helped solidify control for the Jewish priesthood. Jewish patriarchy existed to maintain the integrity, stability, and economic viability of the family as the basic social unit. To accomplish this, Hebrew priests placed the male as head of Israelite society. This arrangement bound the family to a closed system capable of resisting outside pressures to assimilate. The vehicle they used to carry out this mandate was the Word of God.

Throughout the Old Testament, Jewish priests declare that the Law of God required a strict family hierarchy unique to the ancient world. Their justification came via the Genesis myth. And even though there were other creation stories which were more popular amongst the ancient Hebrew people, Israelite holy men declared it the Word of God.

Other problems exist with the Genesis account. Scholars claim that a proliferation of creation stories passed among the Jewish people. However, only two survived. Even though the Adam and Eve story was not the most popular among the common Israelite, the Levite priests favored it. Many biblical scholars agree that these priests edited the account through numerous changes with specific goals in mind. (Dartmouth Bible and Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay*. As quoted in Stone, *When God Was a Woman*, 105). As researchers have now extensively documented, the final reduction of the creation story and the Jewish Torah (or the first five books of the Old Testament) was still going on as late as 400 BCE.

During this time the biblical mythology on which Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are based was being sifted, edited, and amended by a group of Hebrew priests identified by biblical scholars as the P or Priestly school. This label distinguished them from earlier re-mythers, such as the E or Elohim school who wrote in the northern kingdom of Israel, and the J or Jehwah (Yawehist) school of the southern Kingdom of Judaea. These E and J editorial teams also reworked Babylonian and Canaanite myths, as well as Hebraic history to suit their purposes. Now the P team began rewriting these ancient texts in an effort to produce a new holy package. Their aim, to quote the biblical scholars who annotated the famous Dartmouth Bible, was "to translate into reality the blueprint for a theocratic state." (Dartmouth Bible, 10). By patching together sections of earlier writings, priests rewrote the Old Testament, a process that explains why there are so many contradictions and internal inconsistencies in the Bible.

Whereas the local religion was one of immanence, the Yawehist religion was one of strict transcendence. Unlike the agrarian Goddess worshippers, the Hebrew pastoralists did not immerse themselves in cyclical rituals designed to maintain equilibrium with the seasons. As a result, they disconnected God from the earth. As nomads they also saw themselves as detached, individuated, "chosen" as a people no

longer bound to the rhythms of the world. As a result they separated the divine idea from its natural and animal affinities and religion became ethical.

The Hebrews did not experience their God tactilely, but thought and wrote about Him, prompting descriptions of God rather than experiences with Him. Yahweh lived outside the world and visited through ideas. He was a *word* God and his priests translated these concepts into law, introducing Jewish morality into the land. Whereas ancient religion was one of energy and magic in the impersonal form, the personal Jehovah gave the Hebrews a list of regulations and commandments to obey. He was also a suspicious God who would have, "No other gods before him." The Goddess and her nature worship had to go.

In *The Gate of Horn*, G. Rachel Levy analyzes the character of Yahweh as the psychological-historical projection of the Bronze Age people growing apart from their ancient ways. Rachel Levy, *Religious Conceptions of the Stone Age, and Their Influence Upon European Thought* (New York: Harper Row, 1963), 196. See also Leonard Shlain, *The Alphabet verses the Goddess* (New York: Penguin, 1978).

I began to wonder if the Genesis story had simply been created to dethrone the Goddess religion. I began to reexamine the questions I'd always entertained about Adam and Eve. Why would God tempt the couple with a snake and a tree? Why would God curse the entire human race because Adam and Eve sought knowledge? Why was Eve responsible for the fall of the entire human race?

And it was from this misogynist myth that the Apostle Paul's New Testament teaching on women was based. In I Timothy he stated, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner."

I began to trace Paul's use of Old Testament law to marginalize women. In I Corinthians, he declared that they were required to wear hats in church. Paul defended his argument by claiming that, although men were made in the image of God, women were made in the image of man in order to serve him.

In chapter 11, Paul stated, "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head . . . For if a woman be not covered, let her also be shorn . . . For a man indeed ought not cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."

Paul not only referred to Old Testament Scripture but Jewish tradition as well. Talmudic literature taught that a woman displaying her head was like a person exhibiting a physical deformity. As judgment for having caused the Fall of Adam, she was spiritually marked to signify her shame and required to cover her disgrace. The Talmud argued that a woman's head covering also protected her against her own natural female weakness. Paul also taught that women should remain silent in church. Again, he turned to Rabbinical literature which forbade women to speak in church so as not to distract the men from praying.

Talmudic literature of Paul's day reveals such thought, "Why does a man go about bareheaded while a woman goes out with her head covered? She is like one who has done wrong and is ashamed of people, therefore she goes out with her head covered.

(Gen. Ber. XV11 8). I Corinthians 14, Paul argued that women were to remain silent because of the Law, "As in all the churches of the saints, women were to remain quiet at meetings since they have no permission to speak; they must keep in the background as the Law itself lays it down. If they have any questions to ask, they should ask their husbands at home."

In each case, Paul used Jewish law and tradition to justify his subjugation of women. Meg 23a.

## Chapter Twelve

### The Dark Night of the Soul

See more on the impact of Welfare Reform in Washington State in Heath Foster, *State's Welfare Reform Law Makes it Tough to be a Student*, The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, December 14, 1999.

Page 229: See Fredrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, The Antichrist, (New York: Vicking Penguin, 1954), 598, 634, 611, 618.

Pg: 229 Many scholars believe that Paul's teaching had little to do with Jesus' original message. In, *The Bible, the Quran, and Science* Maurice Bucaille states, "Paul created Christianity at the expense of those whom Jesus had gathered around him to spread his teachings." Dead Sea scholar Robert Eisenman claims that the documents reveal that James—Jesus' brother, not Peter or Paul, was the true torchbearer of Christ's message. About Paul he states, "It would be more proper to refer to Western Christianity at this point as 'Pauline' or 'Gentile Christian'." Robert Eisenman, *James, the Brother of Jesus: The Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (USA: Penguin, 1998). In *Androcles and the Lion* the playwright George Bernard Shaw said, "There is not one word of Pauline Christianity in the characteristic utterances of Jesus." Even Thomas Jefferson declared, "Paul was the first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus." Thomas Jefferson, Vol. 15, 245 As cited in C. Dennis McKinsey, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1995), 41.

Paul set out to create a religious institution that could be spread to the world. It seems odd that Christians never ask why Paul's complicated doctrines like justification by faith never occurred to Jesus and his followers or why Paul spent most of his time opposing the teaching of Christ's original disciples— like Peter and the Elders of the Jerusalem church?

Many churches today expound on Paul's dictates and judgments while leaving Jesus' message of inner light and love to be ignored. The Christian church must remember that such religious law making was the one thing Jesus unequivocally condemned.

Paul and Christ's view of religion was almost the quintessential opposite:

In Matt 6:5-6, Jesus declares about prayer "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. . . But you, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to the Father which seeth in secret."

Paul encourages his readers to, "pray everywhere lifting up holy hands, (1 Timothy 2:8).

Whereas Paul declared in I Corinthians 6:9-10, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of god? Be not deceived: neither fornicator, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. . . , shall inherit the kingdom of God." Jesus on the other hand, says in Matthew 21:32, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you (the religious teachers)."

In Matthew 7:1-2 Jesus commands his disciples to "Judge not, that ye may not be judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged."

Paul however, tells his followers that, "The spiritual man judges all things"(I Cor. 5:12) and "Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?" (I Cor 2:15). Jesus tells his followers in Matthew 23:10 that they are to call no man master. Paul however demands that servants, "be obedient to your masters." (Eph. 6:5) and women "submit yourselves unto your husbands" (Eph. 5:22).

## **Chapter Sixteen**

### **The Absence of Dogma**

Pg. 265: A fascinating account of the events that surrounded the discovery and public acquisition of the Gnostic Gospels can be found in the introduction of Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1989).

Page 276, see: Gospel of Thomas 32.10-11, in NHL 126. Elsewhere in the *Gospel of Thomas*, Christ instructs his followers, "For whoever has not known himself has known nothing, but whoever has known himself has simultaneously achieved knowledge about the depth of all things."

Many believe that The Gnostic Gospel's reveal Christ as a mystic sage. Rather than the Orthodox view of Christ as God coming to earth to sacrifice himself for the sins of mankind (actually the Orthodox "substitutionary atonement" doctrine was not introduced into Christianity until the 4<sup>th</sup> century by Saint Augustine—along with the novel concept of original sin). The Gospel of Phillip also depicts Christianity as a form of Syrian Mystery-knowledge possessing an elaborate system of esoteric sacraments. The Apocalypse of Adam and the Sacred Book of the Invisible Spirit continue to portray Christ as a mystic sage. Gnostic teachings from the school of Valentinus reveal detailed celestial cosmology. Some teach that the Gnostics declare that Jesus taught a secret tradition of knowledge similar to the ancient Mystai in the East. Much of Gnostic Christianity emphasized personal enlightenment through symbolic death and resurrection—rituals that had existed in mysticism for centuries.

Some scholars claim that Jesus used baptism to illustrate this process of inner illumination. Many now agree that Jesus performed these symbol-filled baptisms. As Christ lowered the participant into the water they figuratively descended into the underworld. Then, by arising from the watery grave, they were awakened to their inner divinity. The Gospel of Phillip claimed that through baptism, individuals were awakened into a higher life of spiritual oneness with God. . These esoteric rites were not new or unique with Christ. For ages the Mystia, or followers of the ancient Mystery Religions, taught this path to enlightenment.

This cosmology is reflected in the Greek myths—this symbol of man’s divine journey of death and resurrection. For instance when Heracles descended into the underworld to bring back the hell-bound Cerberus, in order for him to brave the travails of hell, he first had to become initiated. Only through this development of the Soul, could he overcome the dangers of the underworld. Once he completed this process, he proceeded into the depths of Sheol and rescued Cerberus. We have accounts of these ordeals. One comes from an initiate named Menippus. He claimed to have been taken to Hades and brought back again by the followers of Zoroaster. In the course of his wanderings he crossed a great river and passed through fire and ice. He wrote that he was stricken with terror when the ground was taken from beneath him and he watched battles where blood flowed freely. “Everything that seemed to be living before was put to death.” But even amidst such horror the initiand was resurrected and his life began anew, a life that now concerned itself with spiritual existence and not the lower life. In this ritual the Mystai claimed to discover the eternal creative Self, which spanned eternity. By crucifying the lower self, the God-self emerged. The Mysteries called this process “man’s divination.” As cited in Rudolph Steiner, *Christianity as a Mythical Fact* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1997), 86-104 and in Andrew Welburn, *The Mysteries* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1997) 25-44.

Greek literature is filled with this theme. Greek Philosophers like Heraclitus and Phthagorus claimed that the very point of human existence was to awaken the Eternal within. The Pythagorean community designed education to foster such an encounter. Plato's *Timaeus* also embraced this idea. The philosopher claimed that the Father created the universe out of his own essence, (see also the even earlier Egyptian myth of Osirus) Plato used the metaphor of God stretching out his body in the form of a cross, as the world-soul or *anima mundi*, and dying in order that the world might exist. Plato therefore, called nature the "tomb" of God where the Divine lies dormant. All matter, both animate and inanimate composed this world-soul waiting to be resurrected or awakened. Plato argued that as we progressed in our knowledge of this slumbering God, we became illuminated, released the spell that bound such understanding and were awakened.

The mystery religions of Babylonia and Syria preformed baptismal rites to awaken the God within. In Mesopotamia, the priest of Ea, god of wisdom, guarded the "sweet water" that bubbled from the ground. Initiates partook in washing rites that prepared them to enter paradise. Scholars have tied this ritual with the similar wording in the Gospel of Phillip.

In his work on mythology, Joseph Campbell claimed that this death and resurrection motif has characterized culture throughout the ages. During man's hunter-gatherer stage, the animal’s sacrifice represented death so that the tribe might live, a

sacrifice that nurtured new life. Once man evolved into an agricultural being, the seed represented this cosmic principle. The seed was buried in order to rise again and bring new life to society.

Throughout the ages, mysticism has evolved around this teaching. Those who have died to the flesh have been reborn again to the spirit. This has been the essential experience in any mystical realization—from the Eastern or Western traditions. Adherents identify themselves with the conscious body, which they acknowledge is only a vehicle. Once they die to that vehicle, they transfer identification to the spirit, and believe that enlightenment has been achieved.

The Gnostic teacher Valentinians ( c. date of life) was one of the first great mystical Christian leaders. He claimed that God was both male and female and indwelt all things. He emphasized the equality of women and encouraged them into leadership.

Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215) also combined mystical Christianity with an egalitarian view of women. He believed God to be an all-inclusive cosmic energy writing that, "The Son of God is not divided, not separated, but is present everywhere at all times and knows no boundary."

Clement's major works Paedagogs (The Teacher) and Stromateis (Miscellanies), claim that through union with God, humans could achieve their own enlightenment. He argued that Jesus' message encapsulated this teaching.

Clement also emphasized that men and women shared in the same Godly essence. "Men and women share equally in perfection, and are to receive the same instruction and the same discipline. For the name 'humanity' is common to both men and women; and for us."

As persecution to the early church increased, many left the centers of civilization and fled into the desert regions around Palestine. Followers of Clement began to teach a combination of asceticism and mysticism, which eventually became the basis for Christian monasticism.

Others kept this mystical tradition alive. The great medieval nun Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) experienced visions throughout her life, calling God the living light: the divine power that lay at the center of all things. Like the pre-Christian Greek philosophers, Hildegard believed that God moved as the evolving force in creation. She described God as,

I, the fiery life of divine essence, am aflame beyond  
the beauty of the meadows. I gleam in the waters. I  
burn in the sun, moon, and stars, With every breeze, as  
with invisible life that contains everything. I awaken  
everything to life. I am the breeze that nurtures all  
things green. I encourage blossoms to flourish with  
ripening fruits. I am the rain coming from the dew  
that causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life.

Because Hildegard believed that this God-energy indwelt every living creature, she celebrated the cosmos and sought compassion, peace, and justice. She was a doctor, a pharmacist, a playwright, a poet, a painter, and a musician. Hildegard criticized the church for its corruption, greed and emphasis on human sinfulness.

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) followed this tradition and became one of the most celebrated Christian mystics in history. St. Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant in the Italian town of Assisi. After suffering a serious illness, sold all of his worldly goods and dedicated himself to a life of prayer and service to the poor, which prompted his father to disown him. Francis went on to establish the Franciscan Order.

Francis emphasized God's all-pervasive presence. He taught that nature was infused with the great soul of God. In his great poetic hymn, *Canticle of Brother Sun*, he extolled the virtue of living in harmony with the entire cosmos, to which all elements were brother and sister. Francis also had great respect for women. He taught alongside his lifelong friend, St. Clare who eventually founded a similar order of the Franciscans for women centered at the church of St. Damiano in Assisi.

Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) was born of a noble family in Hochheim, Germany. He entered the Dominican Order at a young age and, once an adult, became a highly acclaimed teacher and thinker. He taught that the *Seelenfünklein* or "center of the soul" possessed the very nature of God. Before long, his teachings began to fall under suspicion with the church and it warned him against heresy. Also facing great opposition, Eckhart supported the Beguines, the women's liberation movement of his day.

Because of his mystical teachings and his support of women's rights the Catholic Church condemned him a few months after his death. In March of 1329 the Pope denounced twenty-eight articles from Eckhart's work. Under suspicion, Eckhart's writing fell into obscurity for centuries.

The medieval Catholic nun, St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) taught that humans could achieve ecstatic oneness with God. She described this experience as a rapture or flight of the spirit, an occurrence that compared to being borne on the wings of an eagle. In *The Interior Castle*, Teresa called this mystical union the spiritual marriage of the human soul with the Divine. Teresa's mysticism also brought her in political opposition with the church.

Protestant mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) grew up the son of a poor peasant family in Germany. In 1600, newly married and by then a master shoemaker, he had a deep religious experience, which led him to believe that all things were an expression of, and in complete harmony with God. Boehme began to read the writings of Paracelsus, the mystical physician, philosopher, and alchemist influenced by the teachings of Gnosticism and the mystical writings of the Jewish Kabbalah. Boehme claimed that everything took its life from the unconscious Ungrund. His work *Aurora* mixed philosophy, astrology and devotional texts celebrated the world's unity.

When the Protestant town pastor discovered Boehme's writings, he condemned the work. Denouncing him from the pulpit and threatening to have him arrested. Over the years the minister continued to try and silence the mystic. Finally Boehme submitted to voluntary exile and died soon afterward.

In the nineteenth century the Russian mystic Vladimir Solovyov also (1853-1900) read Boehme's writings, along with the Kabbalah and other mystical literature, and became fascinated with the metaphysical. He attended Moscow Theological Academy and was offered a lectureship in philosophy at the University of Moscow. In order to receive Divine Wisdom, Solovyov also prayed to its Divine embodiment named, Sophia, asking her to reveal Herself to him. He claimed that she granted him a vision in the

Sahara desert exposing the "oneness" of everything. About the experience Solovyov wrote:

What is, what has been, what is yet to come,  
My unmoving gaze embraced all this . . .  
Below me seas and rivers appear blue,  
And the distant forest also, and snow-capped mountains  
I saw everything was just one,  
Just one image of feminine beauty

Barriers are sundered,  
fetters are melted  
By the divine fire,  
And the eternal dawn of a new life rises  
In all, and all in One.

Solovyov declared that, out of this union, life danced in a collective harmony. He taught that there was organic unity to all knowledge and a spiritual nature to the entire evolutionary process. He believed that if humans understood this cosmic unity, they would embrace one another. This motivation prompted him to advocate the reunion of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. This vision did not endear him to his colleagues and Solovyov was forbidden to publish articles on theology or lecture publicly for many years.

Both Rudolph Steiner and the Roman Catholic priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin expanded upon Solovyov's teachings. Steiner (1861-1925 ) was born in Austria. Growing up in small peasant village, he was recognized as a brilliant student. He went on to finish degrees in mathematics, physics, and chemistry and a doctorate in philosophy. Steiner also became an avid Goethe scholar and while studying Goethe's mystical writings, he began to explore the concept of the "Cosmic Christ."

Steiner taught that from the beginning Christ held a creative position in the universe. Through His energy all things came into existence. Steiner's theology resembled that of the first century Gnostics, who also cited John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," to explain Christ's preeminent role in creation.

Steiner claimed that even before Jesus' life, the Mystery Religions understood this divine indwelling of matter. Christ's life was simply a higher reflection of such truth. Like the rite of Osirus, Jesus poured his body out to illustrate this all-inclusive mystical inhabitation. Steiner taught that as humans rose above their sensory observations they would develop the skills to recognize this spark and see the face of God in all things. He argued that such deep spirituality could only be attained in the atmosphere of complete freedom. Thus, he was a fierce proponent of women's equality.

Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was also a great mystic and friend to women. He was born in the Auvergne region in France to an aristocratic family descending from Voltaire. Even as a child he had a deep sense of the universe's harmony. At a young age, he became a priest and celebrated paleontologist and began to teach that God's spirit moved in the evolutionary process.

Teilhard read Steiner's work and applied his concept of the Cosmic Christ to the subatomic world. He taught that a divine force surrounded and energized all things, stating that, "Christ indwells and is rooted in the world, right into the heart of the tiniest atom." He declared love as the internal dynamic within the universe that cohered it into an organic whole. This force of love, active in all matter, was the impetus behind evolution.

He claimed that man also shared in this progressing Divinity. In *The Mass on the World*, Teilhard wrote, "Through your own incarnation, my God, all matter is henceforth incarnate . . . and humanity is a microcosm in which the Incarnation is wrought." He believed that Christianity would usher in a "new era of interior liberation and expansion." However, this new epoch would not arrive if mankind continued to cling to antiquated dogma. He declared that religion, like humanity, must evolve as well.

As it had with the mystical rebels of the past, the Catholic Church soon censured the priest. However, after the Church warned him to refrain from his teachings, he replied, "The moment has come when the Christian impulse should 'save Christ' from the hands of the clerics." In return, the church imposed an order of silence on him, forbidding him to teach about spiritual matters. It forbade the publication of his writings until his death in 1955. However, Teilhard's "Cosmogonesis" could not be suppressed. In this century, his teachings have influenced numerous twentieth century Catholic theologians like Matthew Fox and Thomas Berry.

God's evolutionary presence has also been expressed in the twentieth century teachings of Process Theology. Process Theology traces its roots to the Greek philosophy of Heraclitus who viewed reality in terms of "becoming" rather than "being." Heraclitus proposed that all things were in constantly flux, growing toward mature expression.

In the early twentieth century mathematician Alfred North Whitehead took this concept and applied it to modern physics. He taught that subatomic particles were not static substances but dynamic "occasions" influenced by their surroundings. He claimed that, "Nature is a structure of evolving processes. The reality is the process."

Whitehead critiqued the popular concept of Newtonian physics, claiming it reduced the world to "brute matter . . . which is senseless, valueless, purposeless . . . It is this assumption that I call 'scientific materialism.' It is also an assumption which I shall challenge as being entirely unsuited to the scientific situation at which we have now arrived."

In contrast to the dominant Enlightenment philosophies of the twentieth century, Whitehead rejected a reality based upon substance and permanence and instead, embraced the idea that matter and truth were evolving. God lived within material, and grew by absorbing and transforming events in the world. The Divine moved in a dynamic universe.

In the 1940's, Paul Tillich, a refugee from Nazi Germany, expanded Whitehead's advancing reality. He called it the "Source of All Potential," the "Ground of All Possibility." For him God was not a transcendent Father, or an external personal force, but rather an internal reality that held the meaning of life itself. God embodied the mystical presence initiating all evolutionary progresses.

Tillich believed that traditional Christianity had distorted the words of Christ into a corrupt system of theological consensus. He called for "Religionless" Christianity—a

movement that would embrace the power of God within the social structure. By working to create a humane world, Christians could fulfill the true calling of Jesus. Whereby they could also embrace God's evolving Spirit through social activism. Tillich's teaching became the foundation for twentieth century Process Theology.

Throughout history, Christian mysticism has not only survived but evolved as well. Whereas the mystics of the Middle Ages cloistered themselves from society, many of today's modern mystics embrace public life and discourse. For them, union with God demands integration and not withdrawal from society. Besides being engaged in society, men like Rudolph Steiner, Teilhard de Chardin, and Paul Tillich have integrated science with religion, seeing God's work as the mystical process guiding evolution.

These men have proposed a unity between science, religion and mysticism declaring that God's power resided in the subatomic world, rather than religion. This Force not only created the world, but continually sustains and moves it to a higher level.

Twentieth century Orthodoxy has labeled this thinking liberalism and emphatically condemned it. The judgment is no surprise. Organized religion has habitually opposed any movement that has attempted to place authority outside of the church or given humanity confidence to trust its inner voice. Since Old Testament times, the church has made the sinfulness of man its abiding mantra. Mysticism, on the other hand, has emphasized our potential Divinity and encouraged autonomy for both sexes. Mystics have acknowledged control within the individual, rather than within church structure. This freedom strikes at the heart of rule-based religion—a mission, I believe, Jesus would have applauded.

Page 266, *The Gospel of Mary* described Mary Magdeline as a woman favored with visions and insight far greater than that of even the Apostle Peter. The *Dialogue of the Savior* praised her not only as a visionary, but as the Apostle who excelled above all of the rest. She spoke as a woman "who knew the All." Several of the Gnostic gospels recounted the disciples anger over Mary's exalted position and, after Christ appeared first to her, their complaint that, "Surely the Lord knew her very well. That is why He loved her more than us." *Dialogue of the Savior*: 139.12-13, in NHL 340-341.<sup>10</sup> H. Koester, Introduction, *Testimony of Truth*, 45:23-48:18, in NHL 411-12.

The Gnostic practice of allowing women to lead services seems to have infuriated the Orthodox sect of Christianity. Early Orthodox church father Tertullian could not understand how in Gnostic services, "today one man is bishop and tomorrow another; the person who is deacon today, tomorrow is a reader; the one who is a priest today is a layman tomorrow; for even on the laity they impose the functions of priesthood. Tertullian, *DE PRAESCR. 41*, as cited in Pagels, *Ibid*, pg. 42.

Tertullian vehemently protested that, "women among the heretics share positions of authority with men." The fact that they prophesied and baptized enraged him even further. About the practice Tertullian decried, "They all have access equally, they listen equally, they pray equally—even pagans." Tertullian also condemned the Gnostics as heretics for viewing the resurrection in mystical terms. Orthodox Church Father Irenaeus accused the celebrated Christian Gnostic Valentinian of being a wolf in sheep's clothing and that the Gnostics spread, "the bitter and malignant poison of the great serpent (Satan), the author of apostasy." Irenaeus, *Libros Quinque Adversus Haereses* 3.11.9. 1.27.4; and *Ad Florinum*, in Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiae* 5.20.4-8, as cited in Pagels, pg. 24, 46.

The Orthodox Christians continued the same tradition toward women as the Orthodox Jew. The Sotah claimed that, "If anyone teaches his daughter the Torah, it is as though he were teaching her obscenity"; "The words of the Torah should be destroyed by fire rather than be taught to girls", "A girl should not be taught anything except how to use a spindle." Sotah, 3,4, 19a: Joma, 66b 89 Ricci.

Jesus, however, had a revolutionary view toward women. His attitude was in line with the Gnostic's claim that Christ, the mystical sage, followed the teachings of equality that mystics throughout the ages have tended to follow.

In violation to Jewish law, Jesus teaches women. He considers them whole and touches them. He never makes one sexist or demeaning statement to or about women. He never trivializes them or insinuates they are of lesser intelligence or lack the ability to understand truth. He describes himself as a Mother Hen and God as a housewife seeking a lost coin. In the context of the extremely patriarchal society of the time, he is remarkably nonsexist and inclusive toward women.

Unlike other men of his culture, who considered women tainted by virtue of their menstrual cycle, Jesus acknowledged them as pure and equal participants in society. He accepts the touch of the woman suffering from a hemorrhage and the woman prostitute in Luke. He showed no fear of woman and they responded by serving him, showing him affection and tenderness, and offering him gifts. In Luke 7:36-50, When Jesus was eating at the house of a Pharisee, a prostitute came, fell to his feet, unwrapped her hair and began washing his feet with her tears and ointment, and wiping them with her hair. The shocked Pharisee thought to himself. "If this was the Christ he would know who this woman was and reject her." Jesus answered Simon's thoughts by telling him a parable about a creditor and debtor and stating, "Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Jesus looked at the woman and said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

The story of Mary and Martha further revealed this revolutionary approach. In Luke 10, Jesus entered the house of his friends Mary and Martha. While Martha rushes to complete her household chores, Mary sits at Jesus' feet to learn his teachings. Assuming that it was a woman's highest calling to attend to the needs of the home, Martha complained to Jesus that Mary should be helping her. Jesus corrected Martha by declaring that Mary was doing a far greater thing by learning the word of God than cleaning the house.

Again, Jesus taught Mary in disobedience to Jewish law. Only boys were allowed to attend school in preparation for Torah reading in the synagogue. In fact, Jewish tradition held that teaching a woman was dangerous.

Women also traveled with Jesus, which society must have considered even more shocking. From the beginning of his public activity, a circle of women, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, set out leaving home and family to journey with him. They followed him to the cross and refused to leave, even when the male disciples fled. At the time, segregating women from the public eye was an enforced tradition. Women lived almost entirely sequestered to their houses. Referring to the day, the Jewish historian Philo stated, "Women do not go beyond the door of the atrium. Girls stay in the women's rooms, and out of modesty avoid men's glances, even those of close relatives." Phil., In Flaccum 89, ed. A. Pelletier (Paris, 1967), p. 102.

Jesus' relationship with Mary Magdalene further revealed this break with tradition. Jesus met Mary as he traveled through Magdela, where he cast seven demons from her. From that point on she followed him with utmost devotion. At his death she emerged as his most devoted follower—far more loyal than the twelve disciples. The gospels of Matthew and Mark place her first, even before Jesus' mother, in the list of women at Calvary. She stayed with Him throughout his crucifixion and at his burial remained at the tomb. She was the first to discover He had risen. She led the disciples to the empty grave. And after they returned home, Jesus appeared to her and gave her the mission of telling the world about his resurrection.

He refused to censure the way they approached him, though it shocked the Pharisees and troubled his disciples. When he broke new ground in his ministry, he used women to deliver the message. Jesus' first announcement of his Messianic calling was to a woman of questionable descent and lifestyle. The Gospel of John tells the story of Jesus' scandalous conversation with the Samaritan woman.

The Samaritans were Jews who had inter-married with the Assyrians. In 700BC the Assyrians invaded Samaria and forced their union upon the Jewish people who lived there. From that point on, the surrounding Hebrews refused to share food or drink with the Samaritans, allow them to worship in Jerusalem's temple, or interact with them in any way. Understandably, this decree caused much resentment between the cultures. Samaritans often took revenge on Jews by attacking them as they traveled through their territory.

But as Christ moved through Samaria, he stopped at Jacob's well to wait for his disciples. When the Samaritan woman approached, Jesus asked her for a drink of water, an action that strongly defied tradition. The Aboth treatise of the Hebrew moral code stated that men should not spend much time speaking with women. Because of this command, the priests expanded the declaration and ruled that any man who spoke more than a few words with a woman did himself "harm and ended in acquiring hell." Aboth, 1, 5. cf J. Bonsirven, *Textes rabbiniques des deux premiers siecles chretiens* (Rome, 1955) p. 105. and Y. Colombo, *Pirge Aboth. Morale dei maestri ebrei* (Assisi-Rome, 1977), 3.

Jesus not only spoke with the Samaritan woman, but revealed to her that he knew she'd had five husbands and that the man she was currently living with was not one of them. Christ broke Jewish law to converse with a woman who occupied society's lowest category.

In his characteristic way of symbolism, Jesus instructed her about the "living water," revealing to her that he was the Messiah—the first proclamation of such a revelation. The Samaritan woman ran to tell the rest of the village about this man who had "told her all the things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" Jesus stayed with, and taught, the despised Samaritans for three more days.

When the Pharisees drag a young woman caught in adultery before Jesus, they cited Mosaic law demanding that she be stoned (the law actually required the stoning of both parties, but the practice of the time was to kill the woman and let the man go unpunished). Instead of pronouncing judgment, Jesus picked up a stick and began writing a message in the dirt. Some have speculated that He revealed a list of the personal sexual sins of each Pharisee standing before him. Whatever He did, it was effective because the priests immediately released the woman. In this story, Jesus not

only refused to follow Old Testament law, but stood against traditional prejudice toward women.

In Matthew 19, Jesus attacked another misogynist practice when the Pharisees question Him about divorce. At the time, two Rabbinical schools argued about the terms of valid divorce. Deuteronomy stated that, "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because she hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."

The Shammai school held that adultery was the only reason acceptable for divorce whereas the more favored Hillel school allowed for such things as a broken dish or burned food. When the Pharisees asked Jesus which he chose, he replied that, except in the case of a woman's adultery, the man could not divorce her. In this declaration Jesus abolished the popular right of a man to abandon his wife by merely presenting her a written document countersigned by two witnesses. Judaism only allowed this privilege to its men, who could then remarry.

Even Jesus' male disciples reacted in childish protest against his teaching. They responded by stating, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." They resented Jesus' annulment of a valued advantage and their words reveal the depth of Jewish male privilege in the first century.

Church Father, Tertullian reveals that Jesus' view toward women did not survive his death. Three hundred years after Jesus' crucifixion, the church had returned to the Jewish view of woman. Tertullian wrote to the women of his congregation, "And do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex lives in this age: the guilt must live too. You are the devil's gateway; you are the unsealer of that forbidden tree; you are the first deserter of the divine law; you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. One account of your desert—is death—even the Son of God had to die."

When demanding that women be veiled, Tertullian cited both the Old Testament and the Apostle Paul. In his book *On Veiling of Virgins*, he reiterates Paul's teaching that a woman is to cover her shame. "So perilous a face, then, ought to be kept shaded."

In Tertullian's work entitled, *On Female Dress I:I*, he goes on to declare that, "the grace and beauty you enjoy naturally must be obliterated by concealment and negligence, because this is just as dangerous to the people who glance at you. . . The woman is guilty of destroying him just as Eve was guilty of destroying Adam. Tertullian argued that a woman should clothe herself in "penitential clothes" so that she might, "fully expiate what she has inherited from Eve; the shame, I mean, of the first sin, and the odium of human perdition." See also Tertullian's Letter 243, 10.

He declared that man, not woman, was made in the image of God. He wrote to a friend, "What is the difference whether she is a wife or a mother, she is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman."

By the 6th century the Catholic church even questioned whether women possessed souls. The Council of Macon exonerated women from soullessness by one vote.

Nor did the great heroes of Protestant history, Martin Luther and John Calvin, extend their reformation to women. Luther argued that a woman's only purpose was to bear children and serve her husband. He had little sympathy for the effect childbirth

might have on her health. In his Lectures on Genesis, Martin Luther wrote: “If they [women] become tired or even die, that does not matter. Let them die in childbirth—that is why they are here.” Luther believed that marriage served as a woman’s judgment for the fall of mankind. “This punishment too springs from original sin; and the woman bears it just as unwillingly as she bears those pains and inconveniences which have been placed upon her flesh. The rule remains with the husband and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state . . . she sits at home. . . the wives should stay at home and look after the affairs of the household as one who has been deprived of the ability of administering those affairs that are outside and concern the state. . In this way Eve is punished.” Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* , 3, 16.

Calvin taught that only as a woman faithfully served as wife and mother could she erase her evil tendencies toward fallenness: “The female sex is weaker, carrying about in mind and body several vices. But that one good [childbearing] however, covers and conceals all of them: the womb and birth.” Calvin Opera 17, translated by Hughes ed. *The Register* (Brunswick, 1863-1900), 344-435.

In 1559, John Calvin made clear his position on women when he wrote:

We have a special sympathy for poor women who are evilly and roughly treated by their husbands . . . [but] we do not find ourselves permitted by the Word of God, however, to advise a woman to leave her husband, except by force of necessity; and we do not understand this force to be operative when a husband behaves roughly and uses threats to his wife, nor even when he beats her, but when there is imminent peril to her life. . .we exhort her. . . to bear with patience the cross which God has seen fit to place upon her; and meanwhile not to deviate from the duty which she has before God to please her husband, but to be faithful whatever happens." John Calvin, ( Vorrede zu Justus Menius' *Oeconomia christiana* (1529), WA 30-II, 61, 4-7).

(Author’s note: The following research on the Bush Administration was compiled in 2003-- since then, characters like Tom Delay have fallen out of grace but I believe the following attitude is still rampant in the politics of the Religious Right)

An unhealthy mix of religion in politics is reflected in our current Administration. George Bush peppers speeches with Scripture and makes statements like, “Only believers in Jesus go to heaven.” (see: *Bush and God*, Newsweek, March, 10, 2003 page. 27). and “I don’t know that atheists should be considered as citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God.” (In an interview between Robert Sherman and George Bush on August 27, 1987. as reported in *The America Atheist*. As cited in *The History of the Issue* by Madalyn O’Hair.  
[www.holysmoke.org/sdhok/aa011.htm](http://www.holysmoke.org/sdhok/aa011.htm)

Undertaking a “divine” mission to ferret out terrorism, Bush pushes forward opposing international law and defying The United Nations. Shortly after invading Iraq, the President announced to Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas that, “God told me to strike at al Qaeda and I struck them and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did.” (The Newspaper *Ha’aretz*, June 2003). Bush claims that since 9/11, God has called him to engage in a battle with a great evil. As his former speechwriter David Frum declares, “When Bush talks about the axis of evil he is identifying his enemies as literally satanic, possessed by the devil.”

This religious assurance has convinced President Bush that the personal God of the universe is on his side. So much so, that many claim he refuses to consider dissenting voices—those in the national or the international community. As a former staff member reports, “No one’s allowed to second-guess. Even when you should,” (Newsweek, *Bush and God*, March 10, page 29)

The President surrounds himself with those who encourage his messianic fervor and believe the Bible must illuminate the Constitution. In support of Bush’s military actions into Iraq, the President’s religious mentor, Charles Stanley, (Stanley is author of the devotional booklets Bush reads each morning) declared, “A government has Biblical grounds to go to war in the nation’s defense.” Stanley went on to quote a scattershot of Bible passages to justify his argument, then flatly stated that those who oppose the government in its drive to war, “will receive condemnation upon themselves.” (Salon.com *Onward Christian Soldiers*, Max Blumenthal)

I remember Charles Stanley from my own Fundamentalist days. He was one of the original founders of the Moral Majority and instrumental in the formation of Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition. This year, his *In Touch* ministries was one of the first to launch a crusade into war-torn Iraq to reach those “who have not heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These people are in desperate need of the Truth.” (Columbia Chronicle Online, *Make Way for a conservative crusade in Iraq*, April 28, 2003)

He stands firmly on the idea that the Bible is the errorless Word of God and should be used to dictate personal and legislative morality. He is an avid End Time Prophecy advocate (his *In Touch* ministries website tells you what to expect at the Battle of Armageddon, what the Anti-Christ will look like and how events in the Middle East foreshadow Christ’s return). See:

[www.intouch.org/myintouch/exploring/bibl\\_says/end\\_times](http://www.intouch.org/myintouch/exploring/bibl_says/end_times)

Let’s hope President Bush doesn’t turn to Stanley for advice on the Middle East. If he does, the world is in trouble. Stanley’s brand of prophecy declares that before Jesus can come back there must be a new Jewish synagogue built on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem—precisely where the Golden Dome Mosque of Islam is now. And, Fundamentalists declare that the Jewish nation must possess the Holy Land. Because of this, many from the Religious Right don’t want one inch of land relinquished to the Palestinians. But, in an additional apocalyptic twist, after Christ returns, they also believe all of the Jews residing in Jerusalem will die or be converted to Christianity (NPR article.[www.npr.org/programs/morning/transcripts/2003/jun/030612.hagerty.html](http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/transcripts/2003/jun/030612.hagerty.html)).

Using the Bible to predict events in the Middle East is not foreign to the Bush Administration. In February of 2003, *The New York Times* reported that a group of senior intelligence officials in the Defense Department sat for an hour listening to a briefing by a writer who claimed, “that messages encoded in the Hebrew text of the Old

Testament provide clues to the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden.” (see: Bill Keller, *Is It Good for the Jews?* *The New York Times*, February 8, 2003)

Former President Jimmy Carter worried about this frightening trend when he wrote in a *New York Times* editorial that the administration’s justification for war was backed by “a few spokesmen of the Southern Baptist Convention who are greatly influenced by their commitment to Israel based on eschatological, or final days, theology.” (Jimmy Carter, *Just War—or a Just War*, *The New York Times*, March 9, 2003)

Another concern is that Bush has surrounded himself with advisors that share Stanley’s Religious Right zealotry. His advisor Karl Rove is a member and wrangler of the Christian Coalition while Attorney General John Ashcroft’s “charitable choice” initiative would direct federal funds from public agencies and non-profits to faith-based organizations. And House Majority Leader Tom DeLay believes that Christianity is the only legitimate religion.

In 2002, DeLay told the First Baptist Church in Pearland, Texas, “Only Christianity offers a comprehensive worldview that covers all areas of life and thought, every aspect of creation. Only Christianity offers a way to live in response to the realities that we find in the world—only Christianity.”

This worldview makes me nervous. As Hans Kung once said, “When we believe that ours is the only faith that contains the truth, violence and suffering will surely be the result.” (as quoted in Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, pg. 22)

Besides jeopardizing foreign affairs, this Biblical fanaticism in government is eroding our domestic liberties as well. The Bush administration has married religious preference with state function. Their successes have ranged from passing new HUD regulations that allow federal grants for construction of “social service” facilities at religious institutions; appointing conservative, pro-life judicial nominations; introducing a program to allow churches, synagogues and mosques to use federal funds to administer social welfare programs; strengthening limits on stem-cell research; increasing funding to teach sexual abstinence in school rather than safe sex and pregnancy prevention; introducing foreign-aid policy that stresses right-to-life themes, and federal money for Christian prison programs.

Many of these policies have been carried out under a new Bush arm-of-government. With the guidance of Attorney General Ashcroft, the president has created a division in the Labor Department called the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Its mission is to “remove barriers that prevent faith-based and community organizations from receiving federal funding.” White House Conferences are held to teach churches how to apply for these funds and how, “partnering with the Federal government could strengthen your organization’s mission.” (see: US Government website for Faith Based at: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/fbci/more.cfm>)

In order to create this government agency, Bush circumvented a reluctant Congress. When it refused to enact the administration’s scheme, Bush simply signed two executive orders putting the Faith Based Initiative into place. Since then he has instructed six federal departments and more than 30 government agencies that it’s fine to make more than \$65 billion of taxpayers money available to religious organizations. Money that once went to social agencies will now be funneled into church groups and religious institutions.

Besides being a flagrant breach of the separation of church and state, I wonder how human rights violators can be kept away from this money. For instance, in Fundamentalist churches women are not allowed to teach or preach because Timothy states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner." In all secular, and government, organizations such sexual discrimination is illegal. Yet, churches across America practicing such prejudice now receive federal funding through the Faith Based Initiative.

It's the precise reason that Thomas Jefferson and James Madison interpreted the Constitution to advocate for a *wall of separation between church and state*. As Thomas Jefferson warned, religion "engrafted into the machine of government, has been a very formidable engine against the civil rights of man." (letter from Thomas Jefferson to Jeremiah Moor; 1800)

I am not opposed to religious organizations providing a societal safety net akin to George Bush Sr.'s "thousand points of light" scenario. I'm simply opposed to the US government controlling the process. Both sides relinquish integrity and independence. James Madison foresaw such danger when, in 1785, he argued that "religion & Gov will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together (Letter from James Madison to Edward Livingston, July 10, 1822)

Presidents can be religious without assaulting the Constitution. Jimmy Carter (I'm embarrassed that I once condemned him as a secular humanist and held my breath that Ronald Reagan would beat him in 1980) did not force a narrow view of religion on the nation. He practiced an inclusive faith and refused to worship the Bible. In his book *Living Faith* Carter states, "We can't become obsessed with the belief that we have a special ordination from God to interpret the Scriptures and to consider anyone who disagrees with us wrong and inferior. The tendency of Fundamentalists, in Christianity and other religions, to condemn those who differ from them is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of their current ascendancy." (see: Jimmy Carter, *Living Faith*, Three Rivers Press, 2001, page 36).

Carter is wise to be concerned by the Religious Right's "current ascendancy." At no time in previous history has Fundamentalism held America at such gunpoint. Even in the 80's, during the Moral Majority peak, President Reagan kept religious fanaticism to the side-lines of policy making. It is a unique event that Fundamentalism has taken up residency in the White House.

So we must ask, where does Tom DeLay's "Biblical worldview in politics" lead? If we are going to consult the Bible on government decisions, why not go all the way and create a Theocracy? The Biblical God would be much happier with that, rather than adopting a verse here and there, shouldn't we treat the entire text as "God breathed"? But be afraid for your daughters if Jehovah takes over. Old Testament law states that if a girl is not a virgin on her wedding night she is to be taken into the streets and stoned.

We must protect our country from sliding into such religious fanaticism and reconstruct Jefferson's wall of separation—if nothing else, for our children's sake.

But also, we must stop Fundamentalism because it inhibits our ability to achieve consensus with one another. It isolates and entrenches us. Instead of viewing the world as a collaborative whole, it divides us along doctrinal and religious preference and tempts us to believe that God has taken our side.