

Perspective

Nature, Violence, Consciousness, Sexuality & World Religion: A Roadmap (Part I)

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ABSTRACT

In this work, the author strives to provide the knowledge to empower individuals to resist the fallacious claims of religious imperatives and act to correct the diabolical mistakes of the past; to liberate human consciousness, replenish the Earth, protect the tree of life's diversity and safeguard the passage of the generations. If you are a scientist it is a comprehensive source-referenced research review. If you are religious it serves as important reading to understand the actual roots of your beliefs. Thus, this work may serve as a road map to exorcise the founding scriptures abetting violence and homicide in religious traditions. Humans since the dawn of history have used meditation, deprivation and visionary plants and fungi, to enter into internal conscious states that form an inner cosmology, complementing the external cosmology of nature and the physical universe. We need to accept that the pursuit of knowledge requires an attitude of social freedom for individuals to explore their own inner conscious states using visionary species and substances first hand rather than the second and third hand doctrines of prescriptive religions, and accept the lessons of nature in developing our notions of morality as a mechanism to reduce intra-social strife, to in turn achieve social and religious dominance over others.

Part I of this article includes: Introduction, 1. African Eden - Founding Cultures to Burned Offerings; 2. Religion and Utopian Violence; and 3. Evolution of a God acting in History.

Key Words: nature, violence, consciousness, sexuality, world religion, roadmap.

Introduction

This article is a **road map to exorcise the founding scriptures abetting violence and homicide in religious traditions**. If you are a **scientist** it is a comprehensive source-referenced **research review**. If you are **religious** it is **essential reading** to understand the actual **roots of your beliefs**. It is an unveiling expose of the lethal fallacies that underlie religious traditions, which between them, are followed by a majority of people on this planet, and which constitute one of the most principal threats to the future survival of humanity, so that all who follow have a single clear account of how these atrocities came about. I say traditional religions are a principal threat to human survival for very good reason, in regard to both **utopian end-of-days human conflict** and **violence against nature and life's diversity**. This work provides the knowledge to empower individuals to resist the fallacious claims of religious imperatives and act to correct the diabolical mistakes of the past; to liberate human consciousness, replenish the Earth, protect the

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tree of life's diversity and safeguard the passage of the generations. To this end was I born, and for this cause I abide, that I bear witness to the truth.

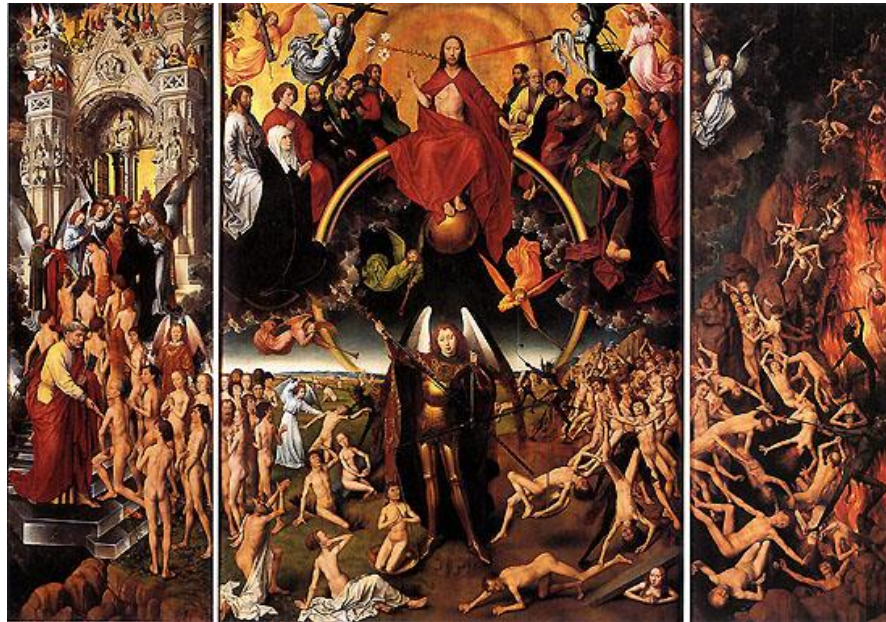
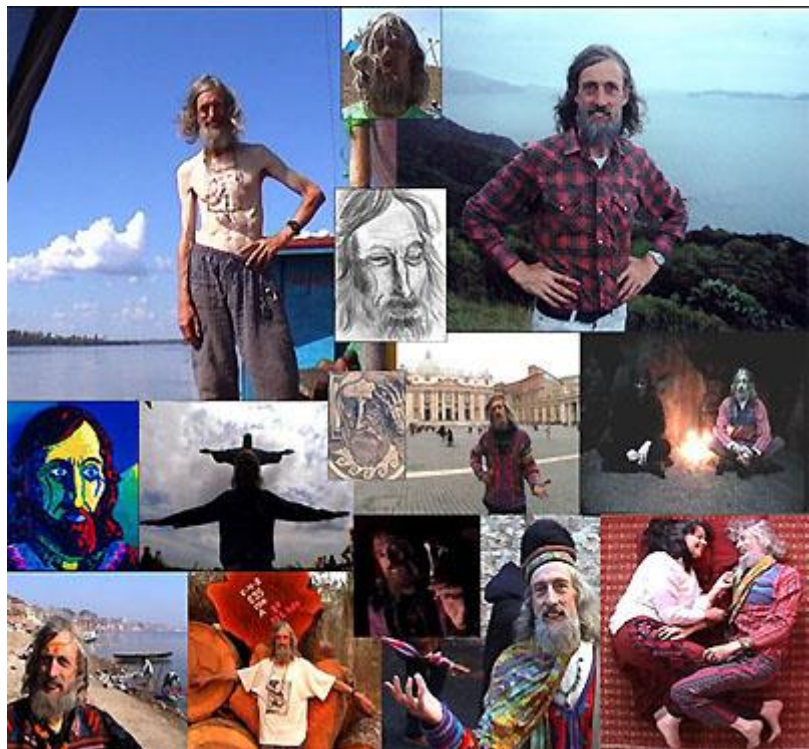


Fig 1: Memling, The Day of Judgment, Gdansk

Fig 2: The author on vigils spanning the Amazon, Rome, Varanasi and Jerusalem.

I am not saying this as a materialist who has no understanding of the higher sensibilities leading to spiritual and visionary experience. In addition to being a scientist with a deep respect for the natural universe and the pursuit of knowledge, I have accumulated a rich diversity of numinous experience to develop my own acquaintance with the *mysterium tremendum*. I have made pilgrimages to the sources of the world's sacred power plants and taken the living sacraments with traditional practitioners. I have wandered India as a sadhu and taken initiations with high lamas. I have made a vigil to Jerusalem in the millennium to perform rites of passage for the sacred



reunion of woman and man in culminating the apocalyptic epoch in reflowering the Tree of Life. I am thus in a position to affirm the source nature of mystical experience at first hand. It is this direct experience of numinous reality that is at the very root of the religious impulse and at the very source in the emergence of new religious traditions. To experience it directly is a human right and one that we should all safeguard as tenaciously as our democratic human rights. It is not a question of freedom of belief, but the freedom to seek the truth of our inner nature, in first hand formative visionary experiences, by any means, whether by meditation, privation or the consumption of visionary species and substances, rather than being bound by the second and third hand doctrines and morally punitive imperatives of prescriptive religion.

1. African Eden - Founding Cultures to Burned Offerings

Humanity has since the dawn of history entered into visionary and mystical states from "shock and awe" to "meditative repose", attributing spiritual forces and entities to the entire workings of nature around us. Indeed spiritual experience is, to a large extent, a natural manifestation of the human condition of being incarnate sentient beings witnessing through our conscious existence the magic and horror of life in the raw witnessed through our ephemeral stream of subjective experience. In many traditional societies, the diverse phenomena of nature, from waterfalls to storms, from diseases to good fortune in the hunt, or in love, are attributed to spirit beings that mingle with natural processes and can be appeased by human vigil and entreaty. Societies have thus employed shamans and medicine men to whom they attribute sensitivity as intermediaries to facilitate society's relationship with the unseen numinous world.

Kalahari San Bushmen, our oldest known existing human culture, with a genetic history going back 150,000 years to the African Eve, have direct access to visionary experience through the trance dance, in which all can reach the visionary state of *!kia* although experienced shamans may do so more skillfully. They celebrate pivotal rites of passage, such as a girl's menarche with sacred reverence in the eland bull dance. They have a sophisticated cosmology in which two gods *≠Gao!na* and *//Gauwa* with shadowy consorts play respectively the roles of creator of all things and harbinger of crisis and misfortune. The Bushmen have a particularly charming creation myth of the high god *≠Gao!na* who appears in many names, *Hishe, Kauha, Huwe, !Gara* and so on:

I am Hishe. I am unknown, a stranger. No one can command me. I am a bad thing. I follow my own path.

One particular version has him making the world in very much the way we find in the biblical Genesis:

He created the earth with holes in it where water could collect and water, the sky and rain both the gentle 'female' rain and the fierce 'male' rain thunder and lightning, the sun, moon, stars and wind. He created all the plants that grow on the earth. He created the animals and painted their individual colours and markings, and gave them all names. Then came human beings, and he put life into them; and gave to them all the

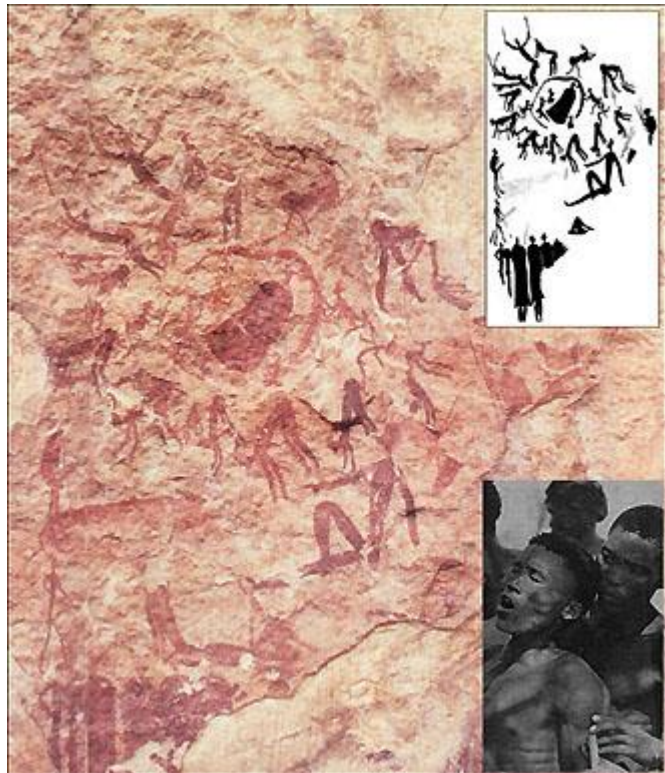
weapons and implements they now have, and he implanted in them the knowledge of how to take all these things for themselves. Thus their hunting and gathering way of life was ordained from the very beginning and ≠Gao!na ordained that when they died they should become spirits, //Gerais, who would live in the sky with him and serve him. He set the pattern of life for all things, each in accordance with its own rules.

Of course this is a story that, despite the very ancient origins of the San culture, has been recounted in modern times, so it may have some elements of cultural contamination, but the overall message is clear. When we hear ≠Gao!na painted the animals with their colours, we understand it metaphorically as a myth in the 'dreamtime', the visionary world beyond, not a literal instruction we depend on practically to survive. When they say ≠Gao!na created the earth with holes in it, this is just an allegorical description of the first act of the great play of life to help the people makes sense of the world and feel in a meaningful relationship with it. Their cosmology includes trickster heroes, animistic forces and an after life in which their spirits become immortal. Yet their attitude to their founding deities is not one of fear and compulsive obedience, but of philosophical acceptance of their sometimes perfidious influences of life, and a refreshing cheeky sense of humour:

!Gara tried screwing his wife in the nostrils. Then he tried her ears. Finally he screwed her nostrils again. He was getting nowhere. His wife looked at him, and said, "Don't you know anything? What do you think you're doing in my nostrils and my ears? Can't you see that there's a much better place here? This is what you 'eat,' you fool."

Fig 4: Cave painting and upper inset diagram: Celebration of a girl's menarche
Fulton's Cave, Tsolido Hills. Lower inset: Trance dance.

However, as societies have evolved, not all these spiritual relationships have been for the common good. While tribal spiritual traditions can help societies keep a closer relationship with nature, which helps foster attitudes that ensure the continued viability of a tribal culture, it can also lead to violence and mutual warfare. Warrior societies spend a disproportionate amount of their spiritual endeavour seeking remedies for perceived supernatural attacks and retribution, either by spiritual curses, the potions of medicine men or direct physical violence against those they believe have committed witchcraft upon them.



As small tribal bands gave way to village cultures and large urban civilizations with the advent of agriculture and animal husbandry, so these spiritual traditions developed into religious traditions. However these larger religious followings, like their village counterparts, led to both culturally integrating and physically violent outcomes. The nature deities of storm and harvest became civic gods defending the burgeoning urban militias and used as totems of war to dominate neighbours and commit acts of atrocity on neighbouring populations. Deities became increasingly involved in moral imperatives to keep larger societies from disintegrating through internecine and tribal conflicts and retributions. None of these features come from the well spring of spiritual vision, but from social mores enshrined in religious clothing to give them the aura of a transcendental imperative.

While, in tribal bands such as the Bushmen, all participants are understood to be able to enter the visionary state through the trance dance, as societies moved from village to city a division ensued, in which the tribal shaman metamorphosed into the priest of an established religion with set doctrines and beliefs. Such a religion has no place for the visionaries who provide the well spring of the spiritual quest, so the priesthood take control of the party line, exiling the prophets and seers, who are left crying in sack cloth and ashes, expelled to desert caves, or eliminated as dangerous defectors.

And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country (Luke 4:24).

The priesthood becomes the mediator between man and god, whose authority is absolute. No longer is spirituality a natural process of personal experience, but is experienced only third-hand through the descriptions and doctrines of the establishment. To maintain the integrity of the state, deviations from the established path become heresies, facing anything from excommunication to violent repression.

The transformation from spiritual vision to religious system has several dimensions, which are necessary for the process to become a fully self-perpetuating belief system, but are of themselves completely unholy worldly imposed realities. Not all of these are invoked in any one religion at any one time, but they are necessary components in the worldly nature of religions as socially dominant processes: (1) To co-opt a founding visionary experience to induce a social theocracy. (2) To apply a moral imperative to society as a controlling influence, to suppress intra-social division so as to increase inter-social dominance. (3) To ensure growth, by enticement, fear of retribution and compulsion. (4) To gain control over reproductive choice to further the following, and in the case of dominant patriarchal religions, to repress female reproductive choice. (5) To enforce social dominance at home and abroad through physical punishments enforced if necessary through militia.

This social and political agenda is in turn made credible to the individual follower by a form of double think. Personal visionary experience is regarded as heresy and replaced with conforming rituals mediated by the priesthood. The followers are made morally vulnerable by their transparency to an all-seeing deity. You cannot see God but God can see you. The necessity of affirmative faith and belief, as integral to the religious quest, is reinforced over evidential support, and autonomous assessment by the individual, of the credibility and efficacy of the

doctrine. A set of social principles is conveyed claiming unquestioning authority of the highest devotion. Membership within the fold is crafted to require fidelity and commitment under threat of punishment for defection, by anything from banishment to execution. Again these are not sacred but the characteristics of a parasitic cultural process.

The entire rationale of naturalistic communion thus became hijacked by agendas of the domination of one people over another, and of diabolical and doomed cosmologies, in which blood sacrifice came to play a disproportionate role, in appeasing the anger of jealous and wrathful deities. Both Near Eastern and Pre-Colombian religions entered into human blood sacrifice as a central mechanism for salvation. This had originally come from principles of sowing back into the land some of the abundance of the last season, as a token of fecundity to promote a good future harvest, but it became a violent and horrific *sine qua non*, in which human sacrifice became the highest and most sacred offering. Neither was this violence the exclusive domain of men. The temples of the planter queens sacrificed the seasonal king in the rites of the descent of Inanna, just as the devotees of Kali performed human sacrifice right up to the end of the nineteenth century. Later kings of Babylonia vacated the throne, so that a substitute could be sacrificed to Ishtar in their stead, a ritual echoed in the death of Naman in the Book of Esther, and the beheading of John the Baptist. Notably Herod, as in Esther, had offered Herodias' daughter Salome "even unto half my kingdom" for dancing Ishtar's descent of the seven veils. This occurred at Herodias's behest at a meeting of Herod's generals to fight Nabatea when Herod had jilted his wife the Nabatean princess and taken up with his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, his cousin. The sacred kings of Malabar were actually required to dismember themselves, and as they died, to throw the pieces of themselves to the waiting crowds. The tribal Ghonds of India tied living adolescents, specially reared as sacrificial *meriah*, to rotating elephants and literally tore them apart with their fingernails, so all could carry a piece of the blood fest back to their fields as a token of fertility.

The patriarchal gods were no less demanding in their sacrifices. The Canaanite and Phoenician god Moloch required parents to sacrifice their firstborn in his name by burning them alive. By contrast, Abraham was told by God not to sacrifice his firstborn, overthrowing a long-standing tradition in Near Eastern cultures:

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son (Gen 22:10).



Fig 5: Sacrificial burned animal offerings were given from the mythical time of Noah to the Temple at Jerusalem in the time of Jesus.

Yet the Jews continued to practice animal forms of burned sacrifice in the temple, from the mythological time of the flood when after they reached dry land, *Noah took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar - a partial genocide of the very life he had saved, and the sweet savor God smelt softened his heart not to destroy all living things again.* Neither was the Hebrew God, who

condemned even Moses his prophet to die before reaching the Holy Land, any less reluctant to commit murder of other peoples. Although the ten commandments say "Do not kill", it is clear this applied only to the Jews, as the Lord commanded Moses, and in turn Joshua, to utterly destroy the cities of Hazor and Jericho and all who lived there. Eventually we see animal sacrifice take human form again with Jesus as the Pesach lamb, accused of blasphemy and insurrection, closing the cycle of the lamb's blood on the doorposts warding off God from killing the firstborn of the Israelites, but not the Egyptian children:

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt (Ex 12:11).

2. Religion and Utopian Violence

For the last decade we have been witnessing a clash of the cultures involving violent asymmetric warfare, pitting superpowers with vast and sophisticated firing power against adversaries who will stop at nothing to wreak terror on innocent people, through suicidal attacks causing maximum human carnage, and outright brutality in premeditated genocidal slaughter - all in the name of the one true religion, whether it be the Sunni, the Shi'ite, or the Christian tradition. The Middle East is now embroiled in a genocidal conflict emerging from the Arab spring in which Sunni and Shiite factions are pursuing a brutal internecine confrontation. There have been genocidal attacks on Yasdis, Christians, Kurds and any populations standing in the path of a so-called caliphate, which at the same time is publicly beheading innocent parties to strike terror

into all its opponents. Yet this so-called "Islamic State" is not just a terrorist monster but an actual manifestation of Islamic traditions that source back to the prophet himself. These source traditions contain founding elements of violence, from the invocation of *Jihad* , or "holy war", leading to the right to genocide of whole communities, justified by the lethal accusation of *takfir* , or apostasy and the slaying of idolaters.

Compounding this, Islamic fundamentalism insists the three generations from Muhammad lay down the absolute rules and penalties for all existence. All Sunnis regard the Sunnah (سنة - the easy or direct (سنا sanna) path - the practices of Muhammad that he taught and instituted as a teacher of the shariah and the best exemplar - to be their prescribed way of life. Salafists, including Wahhabis, define the first three generations from Muhammad (*salaf* سلف ancestor, predecessor) as the epitome of Islamic practice to adhere to rigorously. Salafists believe in Islam strictly according to their own interpretation of Muhammad's and his companions' actions and statements, and do not accept any deviation from their path; they reject any reform or change to their interpretation of religion as it was revealed in the time of the prophet. Muhammad is said in the hadith to have himself said his three generations were the best:

The people of my own generation are the best, then those who come after them, and then those of the next generation (al-Bukhari 8:76:437).

And after them there will come people who will ... be treacherous and nobody will trust them, and they will make vows, but will not fulfill them, and fatness will appear among them (al-Bukhari 8:76:436).

A *takfiri* (تكفيري takfirī) is a Muslim who accuses another Muslim (or member of Abrahamic religions) of apostasy. The accusation of *takfir* is derived from *kafir* (infidel) when "one who is, or claims to be, a Muslim is declared impure." The accusation is leveled by Sunnis at Shi'ite groups and vice versa, but is most centrally the domain of extreme Sunni Salafists who use *takfir* as an excuse to justify violent *Jihad* against all non-Takfiris in the name of religion. For Takfiris, there are true believers and then there are nonbelievers, with no shades in between. Those who change their religion from Islam to any other way of life, or make more liberal interpretations of Islam than the Takfiris do, or deny any of the fundamental foundations of Islam, or who worship, follow or obey anything other than Islam, become those upon whom the takfiris declare the *takfir* , calling them apostates from Islam and so no longer Muslim - and can thus be killed or enslaved. A Takfiri's mission is to re-create the Caliphate according to a literal interpretation of the Qur'an. Takfiris believe that one who deliberately kills himself whilst attempting to kill enemies is a martyr (*shahid* شهيد, *shahīd* witness) and therefore goes straight to heaven (جنة *Jannah*). As such all sin is absolved when a person is martyred, allowing carte blanche for the indiscriminate killing of non-combatants.

The militant group has set up marriage centers where women register to be wed to its fighters. Captured Iraqi women and girls are forced into sex slavery, living in brothels run by female jihadists. Rape of non-believers is considered legitimate, while fatwas proclaiming a 'sexual *Jihad* ' encourage brutality against females (Reuters).



Fig 2: "Purest" Islam: Crucifixion of Christians and others, enslavement of thousands of Yazidi women, and girls, and beheading of innocents, including aid workers and journalists by Islamic State.

There are multiple verses in Qur'an that condemn apostasy, and multiple Hadiths include statements that support the death penalty for apostasy:

But those who reject Faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of Faith,

- never will their repentance be accepted (3:90).

Allah hath promised the Hypocrites men and women, and the rejecters, of Faith, the fire of Hell:

Therein shall they dwell: Sufficient is it for them: for them is the curse of Allah, and an enduring punishment (9:68).

Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah - for them will We add Penalty to Penalty;

for that they used to spread mischief (16:88).

slay the idolaters wherever you find them,

and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush (9:5).

Ali burnt some people and this news reached Ibn 'Abbas, who said, "Had I been in his place I would not have burnt them, as the Prophet said, '

Don't punish (anybody) with Allah's Punishment.' No doubt, I would have killed them, for the Prophet said, 'If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him (al-Bukhari 4:52:260).'

Allah's Apostle said, "The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am His Apostle, cannot be shed except in three cases:

In Qisas for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse and the one who reverts from Islam (apostate) and leaves the Muslims" (al-Bukhari 9:83:17).

So fight them until there is no more disbelief (fitna) and all submit to the religion of Allah alone (8:39).

Fitna (فتنة, فتن) has many meanings - disbelief, affliction, temptation, charm, sedition - but its origins in Islam go back to a time when Muhammad asked some scouts to observe the Quraysh, but instead they killed the leader and took two others hostage. When one escaped and the Quraysh accused the Muslims of violating the sacred months in unprovoked warfare, Muhammad revealed a verse saying *fitna* is worse than killing, absolving his followers of their murder:

but a greater (transgression) with Allah is to prevent mankind from following the way of Allah, to disbelieve in Him,

to prevent access to the Ka'aba and to drive out its inhabitants, and Al-Fitnah is worse than killing (2:217).

The concept and crime of Apostasy goes back to the 7th century. A person is an apostate even if he or she believes in most of Islam, but verbally or in writing denies of one or more principles or precepts of Islam. For example, if a Muslim declares that the universe has always existed, he or she is an apostate; similarly, a Muslim who doubts the existence of Allah, enters a church or temple, makes offerings to and worships an idol or stupa or any image of God, celebrates festivals of non-Muslim religion, helps build a church or temple, confesses a belief in rebirth or reincarnation of God, disrespects Qur'an or Islam's Prophet are all individually sufficient evidence of apostasy. The Islamic law on apostasy and the punishment is considered by many Muslims to be one of the immutable laws under Islam. It is a *hudud* crime, which means it is a crime against God, and the punishment has been fixed by God. The punishment for apostasy includes state enforced annulment of his or her marriage, seizure of the person's children and property with automatic assignment to guardians and heirs, and death for the apostate. In a 2013 report based on an international survey of religious attitudes, more than 50% of the Muslim population in 6 Islamic countries supported the death penalty for any Muslim who leaves Islam (apostasy).

Ivan Šimonović UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights says: *"The atrocities committed systematically and intentionally by ISIL against the Yezidi community, may amount to an attempt to commit genocide. ISIL leaves Yezidis no option except to convert or die".* Zeid bin Ra'ad, the incoming UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, declared that ISIL *"is the*

antithesis of human rights. It kills, it tortures, it rapes, its idea of justice is to commit murder. It spares no one - not women, not children, nor the elderly, the sick or the wounded. No religion is safe, no ethnic group. It is a diabolical, potentially genocidal movement". The massacres, beheadings, rape and torture "reveal only what a Takfiri state would look like, should this movement actually try to govern in the future. It would be a harsh, mean-spirited house of blood, where no shade would be offered, nor shelter given to any non-Takfiri in their midst".

However the desire for the utopian aim of the future world caliphate remains central to Islam. In a 2006 Gallup survey of Muslims living in Egypt, Morocco, Indonesia and Pakistan, two-thirds of respondents said they supported the goal of "unifying all Islamic countries" into a new caliphate. Despite its beheadings of the innocent, and the genocide, rape, abduction and enslavement of the minorities, the Islamic State caliphate has nevertheless become a literal manifestation of just what the theocratic monolith of Islamic state, sharia and scripture entails in its "purest" form, as noted in both the IS-related magazine *Dabiq* and Saudi public opinion:

This large-scale enslavement of mushrik (idolator) families is probably the first since the abandonment of Shariah law (Dabiq).

Al-Hayat the Saudi daily reported that according to a recent poll conducted in the oil-rich kingdom more than 92 percent of the people see the ISIL activities as religiously legal (Teheran Times).

By the same token it is a damning indictment of the strategic deception, or *takiya*, that Islam is a religion of peace. In Arabic *taqiyya* (تقية) literally means caution, but has a more complex meaning in Islamic history of dissimulation, or hiding the truth. Dissimulation commonly takes the form of concealing one's ability in order to gain the element of surprise over an opponent, just as an animal predator disguises itself to appear harmless or invisible to catch its prey. Although it has been used by Shi'ites to allow concealment of their beliefs when persecuted, we shall see later in the context of *sakina* (سكينة), in the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, that *takiya* can more universally constitute hiding the truth to fake the peace, in the pursuit of religious victory, from its original Qu'ranic sources:

Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree,

and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down the sakina [tranquillity] on them and rewarded them with a speedy victory (48:18).

It is by no means hard to appreciate that combining holy war with the death penalties for apostasy and for the infidel who doesn't convert, contradicts any claims of being a religion of a 'true god' with homicidal religious compulsion, consistent only with repression and genocide. But this use of the double jeopardy of *jihad* and *takfir* in the scripture to justify unrelenting killing is only the tip of the predatory iceberg. Religious wars have been rumbling as long as cultures have used their religions to justify violence in the name of one civilization dominating another, and as religions have become more universal, in the name of violent utopian claims to the ultimate victory of the believers over the infidels of one religion or another. Furthermore it is

not just war and genocide that is the result of religious conflict, but the violent control of women and human reproduction and of exploitative destruction of the planet and its living future, through belief in sterile religious paradigms, in which nature is debased in favour of a day of judgment involving hell fire and damnation, with only the true believers ascending into an imaginary eternal paradise full of unnatural and impossible futures.

So it is not just that religions directly cause violence and genocide both against one another and the so-called unbelievers, but that religious viewpoints invoke cosmological end-games of genocide, triage and mass extinction of all life in the name of the cleansing powers of God, that retards and paralyses our ability to cherish and replenish the Earth in the manner which will protect the survival of all life and with it the future of the human species. Religions are not the only forces contributing to this and they will be the first to point to human expediency and greed as a key impediment to humanity's prospects, but religion, for all its pretensions to peacefulness and compassion, remains the key central force of violence and the abuse of the natural order.

3. Evolution of a God acting in History

This brings us to the question of the monotheistic god, claimed to be the aniconic 'true' god of all creation acting in history to bring about the events in the Bible, from flood and pestilence, to war, conquest, exile and servitude. What we actually find however is a changing idea of god, which evolves as cultures evolve and as political events shape the social and religious landscape.

In the first chapter of Genesis, God is described as the dyadic 'Elohim - male and female in their likeness - making the universe in six days in an idiosyncratic, but endearing, sequence, with the plants appearing fully fledged before the sun, allegedly some 4000 years ago. The term 'Elohim - God in the male plural - bears a natural relationship with the older Canaanite pantheon of Ba'alim, regarded as the children of El and his consorts Anat and Athirat. The Hebrew bible associates 'Elohim with a verb in the singular implying God is one, but the reference to male and female clearly implies God has both masculine and feminine complements. Of course this is not the first idea of God historically because the date of writing of the priestly author is exilic or post-exilic 571-486 BC, long after the events of the mythical period in Genesis, but the origin of the 'Elohim is ultimately ancient. The hieros gamos or "holy marriage" of the God and Goddess is an ancient motif leading to the concept of the 'Elohim. The ultimate tragedy of Monotheism is that it did not just overthrow idols, or competing deities, it destroyed the partnership principle that is at the root of the passage of the generations.

From the first chapter of Genesis to the end of the Torah, the sacred union has become occluded by the patriarchal imperative. There are only two places the hieros gamos reappears. The first is in proverbs where we find Wisdom crying out from everlasting in the persona of the feminine complement and consort of the Lord:

*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.
I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. ...
Then I was by him, as one brought up with him:*

and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him (8:22)



Fig 5b: The hieros gamos Left to right: Rock carving Europe 10,000 BC, Negev desert Israel, Catal Huyuk 7500 BC, Inanna and Dumuzi Sumeria 2500 BC.

The coup de grace, in the most beautiful form imaginable, showing us the sacred reunion's full hidden potential, is in the Song of Songs, where the unrequited love tryst between Solomon and the black but comely Shulamite has become ironically transfigured into the Holy of Holies of Israel's mystical union with Yahweh, converted in the Christian tradition to that of Christ and his Church, yet still seeping with sexual lubricity:

*I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying,
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled:
for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.
I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile
them?
My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.
I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh,
and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock (5:2).*

In the more archaic Eden scenario, that follows the Sabbatical creation, the tables are turned on the reunion. A lone and lonely figure Yahweh (YHWH) makes Adam out of dust and breathes life into him in a paradisiacal garden surrounded by four rivers. There is no hint he made the garden let alone the entire universe. He later makes a woman, Eve, the mother of all living, out of Adam's rib, despite intimations in Jewish folklore that the first sexual partner of Adam was the ancient goddess Lillith, who flew up into the air like an owl when Adam tried to insist on the missionary position. When Eve seeks wisdom and mistakenly eats the forbidden fruit of knowledge of dark and light, subtly equated with carnal knowledge, Yahweh curses woman, who becomes the devil's gateway, and through her misdeed, Adam as well, and drives the founding couple out into the wilderness with a flaming sword to suffer hard labour in the thistles and the travail and pain of childbirth.

Explaining mortality is a common theme in myth and folklore, but blaming it on the immortal sex is a fundamental violation of nature, a patriarchal rort to justify a woman having to be ruled over by her husband. It is a deceit not shared by other avowedly patriarchal warrior societies. In the Polynesian myth of Maui the tables are reversed. It is the hero's sexual misadventure that

fails to conquer death. Neither is the female in the piece blamed for his predicament, but laughter at his preposterous venture:

Maui who fished up Aotearoa and is also a trickster hero of Hawaii had the biggest and most powerful penis in creation. He took Hina the wife of Te Huna the monster eel, who came saying 'I am the dark pubic patch, pursuing the assuagement of desire. I have come to you by way of unnumbered shores - along sandy beaches. O detumescent staff, be plunged in the consummation of love. I am this woman from afar, desiring you ardently'. Te Huna challenges him with a tsunami, but Maui enters him and tears him apart. However later, and fatally, Maui decided to crawl into the vagina of the goddess Hine nui te Po, Hine of the darkness, lying flashing where the cold mountains meet the sunset, with eyes of greenstone and hair of kelp, planning to vanquish her and come out her mouth so that death would have no power over men. But as he crawled into the cosmic vagina, the fantail burst out laughing, waking Hine, who strangled Maui in rebirth.



Fig 6: The 'Temptation Seal' Akkadian circular clay seal circa 2200 BC shows two figures, one a horned man or god and a woman sitting before the tree, whose seven branches reflect the menorah of the ancient temple, with the serpent in the background, displaying clear hints of Eden's origin in pre-Hebrew high cultures.

It should also be noted that, in Kabbalistic mythology, the fall from Eden is tragically accompanied by the retreat of the Shekhinah – the feminine face of God's presence on Earth, as the indwelling spirit of matrimonial concord symbolized in the tent of Sarah. The fall thus also indicates a retreat from cosmic unity that can only be undone through the sparks of the Shekhinah again coming together in the fullness of time.

These two diverse types of god 'Elohim and Yahweh or Jehovah, probably stemming from the Northern tradition of Israel and the Southern tradition of Judea, subsequently become, in 'quantum' leaps characteristic of social evolution, a series of quite glaringly idiosyncratic and diverse entities.

Abraham and the patriarchs go far back into mythological origins. In Genesis we begin with the god of Abraham, sometimes associated with El Shaddai the Lord almighty, and with mountains and destruction, with the name El harking back to Canaanite traditions. We also find Jacob worshipping sacred stones at Bethel.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it (Gen 28:18).

The historical evidence from archaeology strongly suggests that the patriarchs were nomadic followers of the male Moon God. Abraham is said in the Bible to have made a journey from his birthplace, Ur of the Chaldees, to Harran. These were the Southern and Northern centers of worship of the ancient Moon God, Nannar or Sin.



Fig 7: Abraham and Isaac (Empoli-Uffizi) Right: The Ram in the thicket from Ur (Woolley)

When Woolley excavated the Royal Tombs at Ur, he was surprised to find a 'ram in a thicket' echoing Abraham's sacrificial offer of Isaac and the 'scapegoat'. Several key names in Abraham's family, Terah (compare Yerah Moon God of Canaan), Laban, Sarah and Milcah are derived from worship of the Moon Deity. Benjaminites were nomads on the outskirts of Mari around 1760 BC who had specific associations with Harran. The names Abi-ram (Abraham) Yasmah-El (Ishmael) Yaqob-El (Jacob), a name also shared by a Hyksos chief and El-Laban (Laban) all appear at Mari.

We enter a second very different narrative, with the *happiru* or outsiders, existing on the periphery of Egyptian society and of the Exodus, with the enigmatic god of Moses speaking out of a cloudy pillar - *ehyeh asher ehyeh* - "I will be who I will be", echoing the San god Hishe's "I follow my own path", leading to a pastoral form of tribal worship in the tabernacle.

From there we enter into the fulminations over various other deities during the aftermath of the Exodus. While Moses is up the mountain for forty days, the people beseech Aaron and he makes a golden calf out of their earrings, so the plurality of their images in jewelry became one deity. But when Moses saw this, he threw his tablets bearing the Ten Commandments in anger, smashing them. When the Levites stood with him he ordered them to slaughter the defectors and

three thousand are claimed to have died. Ba'alpeor or Lord of the Opening has been claimed by some to be a coprophilic shrine where defecation was the offering, but it has also been alleged to be Lord of the Cleft and to involve promiscuous fertility rites. When Midianite women are seen to be seducing Israelite men there, Phinehas runs a couple through with a javelin, turning away God's anger, but according to Numbers, four thousand men were killed, ostensibly in the plague but Moses had ordered every one who had joined to Ba'alpeor to be killed. All this, despite the fact that Moses also worshipped the brazen serpent Nehustan. In a final jealous twist, when the people complained about the lack of water *and food crops*, Moses was himself cursed by Yahweh for hitting the rock at Meribah with Aaron's staff and releasing the waters, rather than speaking to it in Yahweh's honour in front of the people.



Fig 7b. Left: Incense holder from Taanach Israel/Palestine 10th century BC, with symbols of Inanna and Hathor surmounted by a radiant calf.
Right: Hathor administering her life-giving waters from her tree to the deceased being welcomed into the next life. Both the tree and the calf are symbols associating Asherah with Yahweh

Between the 10th century BC and the beginning of their exile in 586 BC, polytheism was normal throughout Israel. It was only after the exile that worship of Yahweh alone became established, and possibly only as late as the time of the Maccabees in the 2nd century BC that monotheism became universal among Jews. Yahweh was worshipped alongside Ba'alim and Asherah who was represented by a tree or pole in the temple. At Kuntillet Ajrud in the 8th century BC YHWH of Samaria gives a blessing with Asherah, identified with Canaanite Athirat, one of the most ancient deities, paired with El and Anath and mother to the Ba'alim. There are also inscriptions to Ba'al and El and one referring to Yahweh of Teman (in Edom) with Asherah, suggesting an identification with the Edomite god Qaus, who is also connected with Edomite Dhushara - Lord of Seir. Seir is the home ground of Jacob's elder twin Esau in Genesis. Among the Jews of Elephantine as late as the 5th century BC, Yahweh was worshipped alongside Anath, and the names were blended in an 'Elohim, as Anath-Yahu. Asherah may also have been identified

with Hathor the Egyptian goddess of love, fertility and motherhood, who administers life-giving water out of her tree.

Solomon, an anointed messiah, the Hebrews greatest monarch, and builder of the First Temple, ushered in a time of religious tolerance, building shrines to other gods and allowing his wives to worship their own deities:

Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem,

and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives,

which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods (1 Kings 11:7).

Here we find Yahweh Adonai, or Lord God, became the head of the congregation of the Host of Heaven, along with the Asherah as feminine bearer of natural abundance, in the form of a tree pole, or grove:

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes (Psalm 82).

Historical commentators point out here the difference between monolatry - belief in one particular god in a culture in which many deities are worshipped and monotheism where there is only one god, and state that much of early Hebrew history consists of the former. Sometimes the host comprises the astral deities cursed by the prophets and conservative monarchs and at other times it is God and the host of angels, forming a militaristic royal court, where the other 'deities' have become subsidiary angelic figures without being exorcized.

On the one hand 2 Kings 17:16 notes the Heavenly Host is cursed so that Israel is lost to the Assyrians:

And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

And on the other hand 2 Kings 19:30 states the Lord of Hosts saves Judah to keep the way of Zion:

And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.

Isaiah's invocation to the Host later becomes the sanctus of the Eucharist:

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory (Is 6:3).

It is clear that from the time of Solomon, there was political dissonance between successive kings of Israel and Judah, some of whom accepted collective worship of many deities, the Ba'alim, Asherah, Tamuz or Dumuzzi and the Queen of Heaven, a form of Inanna, with Yahweh as the Lord of Hosts presiding over all, while many of the prophets and the Kingdom of Judah under its more conservative monarchs struck a narrower line for a Yahweh-only form of religion. Jeremiah noted that the people had lamented that they had always lived in peace in the holy city giving their devotions to the Queen of Heaven:

*But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth,
to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her,
as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes,
in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem:
for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil (Je 44:17).*



Fig 8. Timna: Hathor Egyptian period, Phallic Teraphim and 'Nehustan' from Midianite period.

In the time of Hezekiah, the pastoral worship of the tabernacle was repressed in favour of the central worship at the temple of Jerusalem. He also threw out the serpent Nehustan whom Moses had said was anointed for the task by God. We can thus see that Yahwist monarchs acted not only to forcibly repress fertility worship of the Ba'alim and Asherah but also to repress traditional regional Yahweh worship of the tribes. However fertility worship remained a major

force in societies depending largely on agriculture and the fertility of the earth to feed their people. The sexual rites, cursed on every high hill and under every green tree by the Yahwists formed a continuing motif of catalyzing fertility and abundance through the sexual union of the god and goddess although also accompanied by themes of blood sacrifice. These practices continued in the wider cultural setting of Judea right up to the time of Jesus, when neighbouring Nabatea was at its cultural climax. So we find an ebb and flow. Mannaseh, who followed Hezekiah and was co-regent with him for the first ten years, undid Hezekiah's conservative reforms and reinstated freedom of religion, resulting in the return of the Asherah and Ba'alim to the temple.

However, as times move politically closer the exile and fears of annexation by neighbouring cultures became predominant we come to the jealous god of the unfaithful wife Zion of the prophets cursing Israel for turning away to other gods and hence bringing Israel and Judah into political vulnerability through the wrath of Yahweh. Eventually on the basis of an apocryphal script, now believed to be Deuteronomy, which was claimed to be a book of Moses lying forgotten for centuries in the Temple, conveniently found by the High Priest Hilkiah during reconstruction (2 Kings 22), Josiah cast out all the Ba'alim, removed the tree of the Asherah from the temple, the Sun, Moon and planets, and the Host of Heaven and burned them along with the bones of their priests in the vale of Kidron, took the ashes to Bethel and broke down the groves and high places all around Jerusalem.



Fig 9: Yahweh's name is on this coin 4th century BC near Gaza, depicting a sun-charioted figure holding his sacred eagle.

Within a few short years of Josiah's 'emergency measures' Judah was also annexed and the Jews were taken into exile in Babylon. By the time of the return from exile at the behest of Cyrus the Mede, the older Hebrew religion of the Kings had become transformed into an increasingly stark Yahweh-only cult, with increasing yearnings to an apocalyptic end of days that imposed itself on the Israelites remaining in Judea, insisting that they cast off their heathen practices and abandon their gentile wives. Cyrus became the only non-Jew to be anointed messiah, as Isaiah notes:

Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut (Is 45:1).

However, no clear evidence has been found that indicates that Cyrus practiced a specific religion. His liberal and tolerant views towards other religions have made some scholars consider him a Zoroastrian king, but the Cyrus Cylinder appeals to the help of the Babylonian gods and declares that Cyrus repatriated displaced people and restored temples and cult sanctuaries across Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the region.

Again we have to understand that the god acting in history is really a nostalgic construction of exilic Yahwists, seeking to explain their predicament and justify their continued faith in following the practices of their religion under the yoke of the Babylonians. In fact there is no

evidence that the Yahwist monarchs better kept the kingdoms of Israel and Judea safe than those who allowed freedom of worship. Jehu for example was extolled as a militant Yahwist but one finds a stele of him paying obeisance to the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser. In the Northern Kingdom there was both worship of Yahweh and the Ba'alim. Jeroboam for example did not want his people gravitating to the Jerusalem temple and built two temples at Bethel and Dan with golden bulls at the entrance to represent the national god. Neither was the more eclectic worship of the Northern Kingdom, which continued to worship diverse deities, the cause of its annexation by Assyria. In fact the Assyrians first arrived at the behest of the Judeans, so it is really a case of betrayal by the more Yahwistic kingdom.



Fig 10: Obelisk of Shalmaneser king of Assyria (828-814 BC) showing Jehu kissing his feet. This man who exterminated the seventy sons of Ahab, the forty-two sons of Ahaziah, a 'great multitude' of the followers of Ba'al, and had Jezebel thrown into the street from an upstairs window, trampled by horses and devoured by dogs did not protect Israel, but bowed to the Assyrian yoke. Likewise Josiah raped the sanctuaries and within two decades Israel was taken into exile in Babylon. Not a good track record for the efficacy in history of the Yahweh-only movement.

By the time of Jesus, we finally have the fatherly god Abba, who despite pronouncing forgiveness, provided it only through sacrificing his only begotten son, in a filicide that Christians were for centuries to blame on the Jews for rejecting him, although he was clearly crucified by the Romans. Far from being the eternal creator of a fixed universe, the god acting in history has evolved culturally and transformed almost beyond recognition with the rise of new cult followings.

Yet this monolithic mega-god acting in history, despite his obvious cultural transformations, and all too human flaws of jealousy, wrathfulness and filicide, is claimed to be the genuine god of creation of the entire natural and physical universe, by contrast with the gods of the nations, which are little more than stone images idolatrously worshipped as false deities of storms and civic pride. This claim is a fantasy spawned by believers clinging to the literal truth of a holy book in a manner that can only be described as bibliolatry. This god is no more real by being literally portrayed in a book than an icon made of stone was, and still is in Catholic churches to this day. God's actions in history prove to be a violently dysfunctional sexually-charged relationship with his people and result ultimately in religious war and sacrificial death.

Polytheistic peoples, from the Romans in the time of the martyrs to modern Hindus, will hasten to tell you that iconic deities are just-as-valid representations of transcendental principles, and that an aniconic deity is no more cosmological for lacking any representable form under coercive religious taboo.

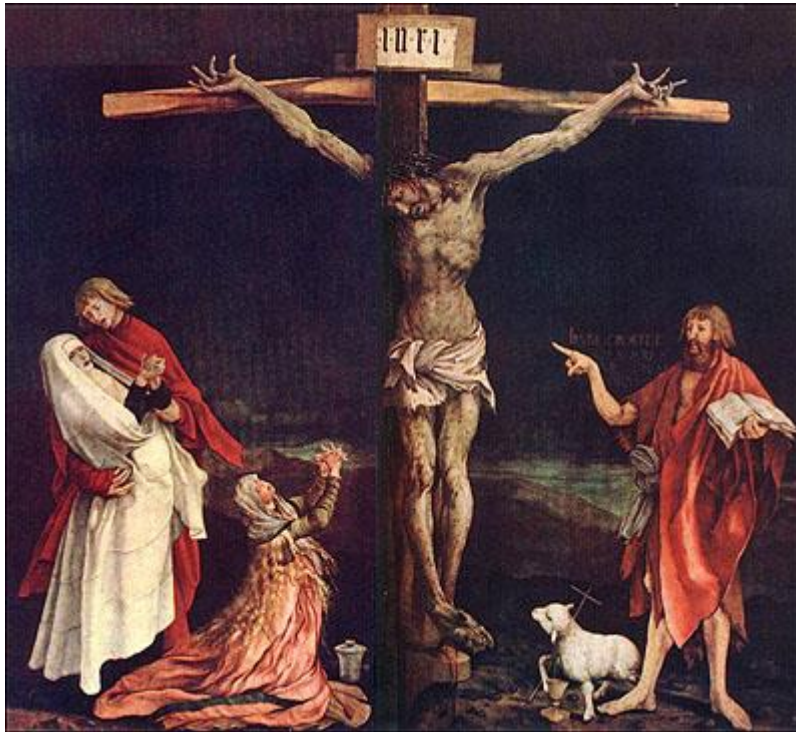


Fig 11. Although Jesus claimed he would return within his own generation, his image is still hanging on the cross two millennia later in churches worldwide and he has instead become an archetype for martyrdom, including suicide attacks by Muslims killing and maiming the innocent (Grunwald).

By the time of Jesus, the human blood-sacrificial principle had again become ascendant in the form of the Paschal lamb, and we find the same neolithic blood stained fallacy - the idea that homicide is necessary for redemption - has become the central Eucharist of the

Crucifixion - without the shedding of Yeshua's blood as the only begotten son of God, there is no remission of sin, as Hebrews 9:22 declares. Even given the great respect believers hold for the inner holy of holies of Christianity, it is inescapable that to found a religion on the notion that the creator of the universe had to commit a cosmological filicide so that we could be forgiven our human imperfections is a violation of every natural and cosmological principle and every principle of natural justice. It was little wonder that the Aztecs, following the excessively bloodthirsty warrior god Huitzilopochtli, sacrificing thousands of people of neighbouring tribes, in a vain attempt to keep the Sun on course, found the bloodthirsty beliefs of the conquistadors to be a kindred religious sentiment which they could immediately identify with.

It remains unclear how much Jesus was himself the author of this violent nexus of beliefs and events. Jesus, like the founders of many great religions, was a visionary genius. Many of his sayings, from the parables to the golden rule, are deeply penetrating insights. Taken all-in-all his vision synthesized a cultural fusion of all the spiritual and apocalyptic components of the fermenting cultures of Israel and the wider fertility traditions of the Middle East. His Dionysian miracles, his financial support "out of their substance" by the women of Galilee, and his eventual anointing by a woman to his doom, attest to the fertility traditions of neighbouring Nabatea. His sayings in the Gospel of Thomas contradict many of the assumptions that he claimed to be the

messiah who had to be sacrificed. In Matthew when he says "who am I?" Simon Peter answers "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", but in Thomas, Jesus replies "I am not your master, but you have drunk from the bubbling spring that I have measured out". Jesus has paradoxical insights about the nature of non-ordinary reality that go far deeper than the cliché of the miraculous messiah portrayed in the synoptics:

It is I who am the light which is above them all. It is I who am the all. From me did the all come forth, and unto me did the all extend. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will I find me there (Th77).

The ostensibly self-inflicted violence on the part of Jesus, portrayed by the synoptic gospels as believing his own death as necessary for the apocalyptic Kingdom to come with Power in their very lifetime, led inevitably to new forms of blood fest, in the form of Christian martyrdom - others following in Yeshua's footsteps to ascend to the highest ideal, despite there being no evidence of the promised Kingdom of Power. Compulsive martyrdom by bearing witness to Christianity became a human epidemic that resulted in gruesome scenes all across the Roman empire.

This tragedy is hauntingly relayed by Elaine Pagels in "Adam, Eve and the Serpent" in the young girl, Vibia Perpetua, of all immortal names, who after dreaming of endless ladders going up to heaven and other visions, doomed her father to sorrow, and galvanized the judge to act despite his reluctance, as a result of her spirited intransigence, going into her martyrdom in high spirits, along with her slave Felicitas who had given her own child, just born in incarceration, into the foster care of another Christian woman:

Just as Perpetua and Felicitas were to enter the arena, they were forcibly stripped naked and placed in nets, so that even the crowd was horrified when they saw that one was a delicate young girl, and the other woman fresh from childbirth, with milk still dripping from her breasts. And so they were brought back again and dressed in loose tunics. A mad heifer was set loose after them; Perpetua was gored and thrown to the ground. She got up and, seeing Felicitas crushed and fallen went over to her and lifted her up, and the two stood side by side. Then after undergoing further ordeals and seeing Saturus endure agonizing torture. Perpetua and Felicitas, along with the others were called to the centre of the arena to be slaughtered. A witness records that Perpetua "screamed as she was struck on the bone; then she took the trembling hand of the gladiator and guided it to her throat".

As noted in Elaine Pagels' 'Gnostic Gospels' the violence of this god caused the early Gnostics to regard him as a mere demiurge, or somewhat diabolical legislator, decried as Samael, Saklas, and Yaldabaoth as noted in the Apocryphon of John:

Now the archon (ruler) who is weak has three names. The first name is Yaltabaoth, the second is Saklas ('fool'), and the third is Samael ('destroyer'). And he is impious in his arrogance which is in him. For he said, "I am God and there is no other God beside me," for he is ignorant of his strength, the place from which he had come.

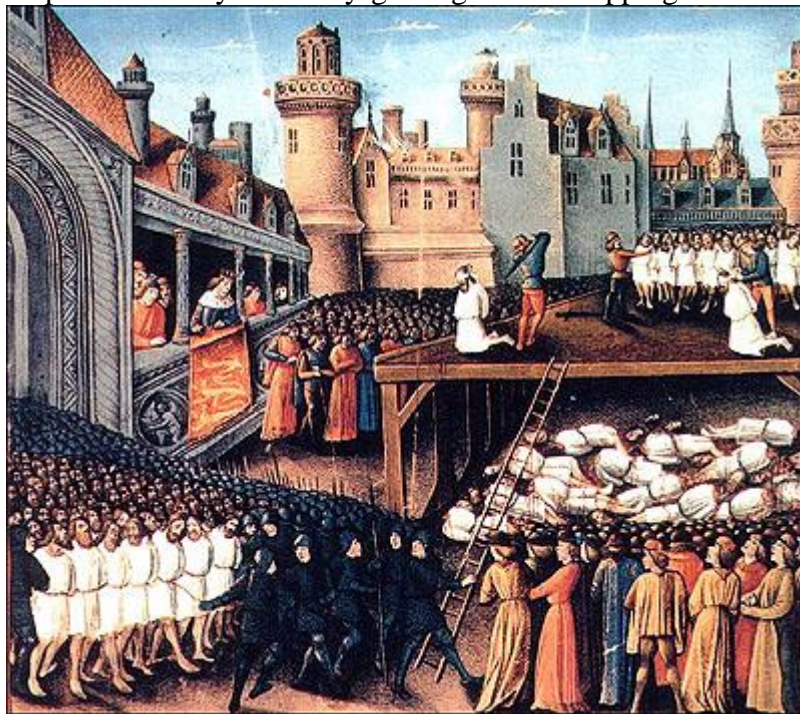
He is Demiurge and maker of man, but as a ray of light from above enters the body of man and gives him a soul, Yaldabaoth is filled with envy; he tries to limit man's knowledge by forbidding him the fruit of knowledge in paradise. At the consummation of all things all light will return to the Pleroma. But Yaldabaoth, the Demiurge, with the material world, will be cast into the lower depths.



Fig 12: Yaldabaoth is frequently called "the Lion-faced", *leontooides*, with the body of a serpent.

We are told also that the Demiurge is of a fiery nature, the words of Moses being applied to him, 'the Lord our God is a burning and consuming fire'. In Pistis Sophia Yaldabaoth has already sunk from his high estate and resides in Chaos, where, with his forty-nine demons, he tortures wicked souls in boiling rivers of pitch, and with other punishments.

The unmitigated carnage of mass martyrdom, driven as much by the spirited insistence of the Christians themselves, as by the brutal excesses of emperors such as Nero, continued until the Roman emperor Constantine converted Christianity into another state religion - of the greatest empire of its day - thereby gaining all the trappings of militaristic power and corruption.



the inward violence implicit in the Christian doctrine stemming from the Crucifixion itself became turned into outward violence, firstly in religious war leading to the Crusades, and then to the Inquisition and witch hunts.

Fig 13: Beheading the 2700 Muslim men, women and children at Acre (Hallam).

The Crusades were a diabolical episode in Christian history in which corrupt and violent elements wrought carnage, and their own ultimate downfall at the hands of a much more highly-principled Saladin. To give an idea of the severity of the killing,

the following and successive passages come from Susan Haskins' "Mary Magdalen Myth and Metaphor", Steve Jones' "In the Blood: God, Genes and Destiny" and Elizabeth Hallam's "Chronicles of the Crusades":

In the First Crusade under Peter the Hermit, ten thousand French of utter cruelty plundered the territory, dismembered some of the babies, others they put on spits and roasted over a fire, those of advanced years, they subjected to every form of torture, only for them to be wiped out when the Turkish sultan tricked them into greedy confusion and ambushed them. The Second Crusade was mired in intrigue when Eleanor of Aquitaine became romantically involved with both with her uncle and mythically with Saladin, leaving her husband the king disgraced. Although the crusaders captured Jerusalem, rivalries led to the disintegration of their acquisitions. The Third Crusade was a response to the conquest of almost all of Palestine, including Jerusalem, by Sultan Saladin. At the beginning of the third crusade Richard the Lion-heart, beloved of Robin Hood, presided over the beheading of 2700 Islamic men, women and children of Acre. In the siege of Acre, many of the Christian women attacked the Turks with huge knives, bringing back severed heads in triumph.

In stark contrast to the profligate violence of the treacherous Christians, Saladin was a man of honour, who personally negotiated the return of an abducted girl from the slave market when entreated by her distraught Christian mother. In 1187 Saladin captured most of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. At the Battle of Hattin, the Crusader force was largely annihilated. Saladin captured Raynald de Chatillon and was personally responsible for his execution after swearing to execute him in person, because he had murdered and tortured members of Muslim caravans and insulted the prophet, even though they had in vain, besought his mercy, reciting the truce between the Muslims and the Crusaders. Guy of Lusignan one of the leaders of the Christian armies was also captured, however Saladin spared his life, saying of Raynald, *"it is not the want of kings, to kill kings; but that man had transgressed all bounds, and therefore did I treat him thus."*



Fig 14: The altarpiece at Albi, commissioned as a warning to the Gnostics, who shed their clothing to resume the nakedness of innocence, undoing the original sin of the fig leaf, after they were brutally suppressed by the Catholics.

The Inquisition was an extension of the Crusades turned inward on the population of Europe for perceived heresy, brought back by travelers from the crusades to the Holy Land, who had made contact with lingering Gnostic remnants there. Anyone with beliefs deviating from a narrow Catholic doctrine, now corrupted by Popes who had become the most corrupt totalitarian leaders in Europe, found themselves facing annihilation. The authorities used their religious imperative to crush all dissent against the imposed social order, even though this dissent was itself sourced in what many of the adherents believed to be a truer religion, closer to Christianity's own actual roots. Likewise Christian mystics such as Marguerite Porete who wrote "Mirror of the Simple Soul" became the first victim of the auto da fe in Paris, summarily burned at the stake, leaving only a small entourage around Meister Eckhardt, who probably died before his Inquisitional verdict was received, virtually the only exponents of the mystical inner tradition.

It is estimated that the witch hunts resulted in 70,000 to 100,000 deaths but others have suggested a much higher figure. During the Crusade against the Cathars and Albigenses, after the siege of Beziers alone, 20,000 were summarily executed on the spot.

Both Cathars and Catholics were besieged by an army of the Church within the walls of Beziers. On the day of the feast of Mary Magdalen they killed their viscount in the church dedicated to her name and were in turn horrendously punished on the same day for repeating the Albigensian heresy that she was Christ's concubine. When the city fell, the commanding general was asked who to slaughter: heretics, his men assumed, must surely be separated from believers. Their leader's reply was simple: "Kill them all," he said, "the Lord will know his own". *Our forces spared neither rank nor sex nor age. About twenty thousand people lost their lives at the point of the sword. The destruction of the enemy was on an enormous scale. The entire city was plundered and put to the torch. Thus did divine vengeance vent its wondrous rage.*

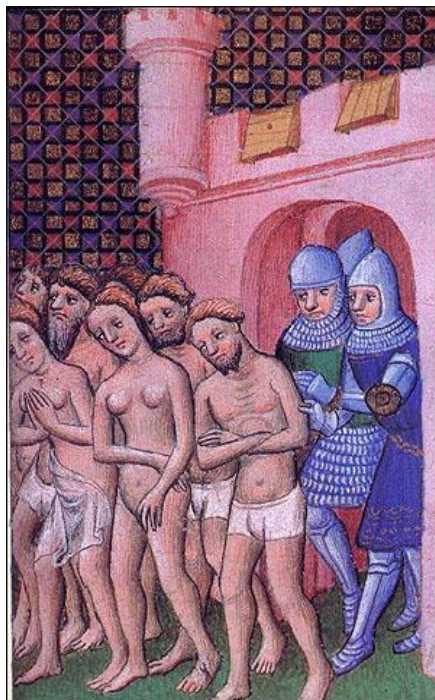


Fig 15: The Gnostic 'heretics' being led out of Carcassonne to be killed for apostasy.

After discussion, our men entered the town of Carcassonne with the cross in front. *When the church had been restored they placed the Lord's cross on top of the tower ... for it was Christ who had captured the town and it was right that his banner should take precedence. ... The venerable abbot of Vaux-de-Cernay went to a great number of heretics who had gathered in one of the houses wishing to convert them to better things, but they all said with one voice 'Why are you preaching to us? We don't want your faith We deny the church of Rome. You are wasting your time. Neither life nor death can turn us from the beliefs we hold.'* He then went to see the women gathered in another building but the female heretics were more obstinate and difficult in every way. *Simon de Montfort first urged the heretics to convert, but having no success, he dragged them out of the castle. A huge fire was kindled and they were all thrown into it. It was not hard for our men to throw them in, for they were so obstinate in their wickedness that they threw*

themselves in. Only three women escaped, whom a noble lady snatched from the flames and restored to the Holy Church.

When we turn to the Islamic version of the monotheistic God, al-Llah, we return to the punitive deity of the Old Testament with the added twist of all life being a mere shadow of the events on the Day of Judgment:

O mankind! Have fear of your Lord and fear that Day when no father shall avail his son nor a son his father. Surely the promise of Allah is true.

Let not the life of this world deceive you, nor let the Deceiver (Satan) deceive you concerning Allah. Surely Allah Alone has the knowledge of the Hour (31:33).

Al-Llah (Allah), which simply means "God" is found on ancient inscriptions in Sinai, partnered with al-Lat, or "Goddess", just as Yahweh was paired with Asherah, The continuity with Yahweh is reinforced throughout the Quran by the accounts of Abraham, Moses and successive prophets, all worshipping the same 'true' god:

Abraham said [to his father]: "Peace be upon you: I will pray to my Lord for your forgiveness, surely He is ever Kind to me.

I am leaving you and those whom you invoke besides Allah: I will call upon my Lord and I am sure my prayers to my Lord will not be ignored."

So when he left them and the deities whom they worshipped besides Allah, We granted him descendants like Isaac and Jacob, and We made each of them a Prophet (19:47).

Jesus is accepted as a prophet in a line extending from Abraham to Muhammad, and becomes the model of martyrdom:

*Surely the likeness of Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam;
He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was (3:59).*

Jesus is also a central actor in the Day of Resurrection:

And there is not one of the followers of the Book but most certainly believes in this before his death,

and on the day of resurrection he (Isa) shall be a witness against them (4:159).

He (Isa) is surely a knowledge of the hour. ... And when Isa came with clear arguments he said:

I have come to you indeed with wisdom, and that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in (43:61).

He also becomes the defining model of martyrdom, believed in by all suicide bombers, in a docetic account in which he did not suffer:

And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the apostle of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him,

but it appeared to them so (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it,

but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure. Nay! Allah took him up to Himself; and Allah is Mighty, Wise (4:157).

However the entire notion of Jesus being the Son of God is completely rejected as pagan heresy, so we return to Yahweh in a pure form, unadulterated by the Hellenistic excesses of Christianity:

Those who say: "The Compassionate (God) has begotten a son," certainly preach such a monstrous falsehood,

that the very Heavens might crack, the earth might cleave asunder and the mountains might crumble to pieces

- at their ascribing a son to the Compassionate (God), It is not befitting to the Compassionate (God) that He should beget a son.

There is none in the heavens and in the earth but must come to the Compassionate (Allah) in full submission (19:18).

Although al-Llah is described as the Compassionate, free rein is given to slay the idolaters, or to convert them by the sword:

So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (9:5).

Islam means 'submission' to al-Llah. Jihad means 'fighting', 'struggle' or 'striving'. It can be taken metaphorically, or even mystically, but in raw physical terms it means a state of 'holy war', involving guiltless killing, and preparedness to die as a martyr, which is described as a painless trip to heaven to see the face of al-Llah. The 'strivers' are mightily rewarded, death is mentioned in the same breath, and those dying in the cause of al-Llah have a special reward in paradise:

Let it be known that only those people should fight in the cause of Allah

who are willing to exchange the life of this world for the Hereafter;

and whoever fights for the cause of Allah,

whether he dies or is victorious, will soon be granted a mighty reward (4:74).

O Prophet! strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be unyielding to them;

and their abode is hell, and evil is the destination (9:73).

and Allah shall grant to the strivers above the holders back a mighty reward (4:95).

Do you think that you will enter the garden while Allah has not yet known those who strive hard from among you, and (He has not) known the patient. And certainly you desired death before you met it,

so indeed you have seen it and you look [at it] (3:142).

and (as for) those who are slain in the way of Allah, He will by no means allow their deeds to perish.

He will guide them and improve their condition. And cause them to enter the garden which He has made known to them (47:4).

Central to the notion of submission, or effectively being slaves to al-Llah, is the archaic notion that we were created from dust, or sticky clay, and hence that al-Llah can at will cause us to die or to be resurrected, just as one can reassemble a simple machine, having dismantled it. We shall see in the Day of Resurrection successive angelic trumpets cause everyone to die and then be brought to life again:

Certainly it is We who give life and cause to die, and We are the inheritors of all (15:23).

Notice that throughout the Quran, 'We' is used, indicating a heavenly host of jinn, rather than a singular deity.

The archaic notion of creation by god is a fundamentally incorrect understanding of living systems, which have to develop from a fertilized ovum for their molecular and genetic processes to complexify interactively and cannot be expressly manufactured from without by any means. The notion of creation from without is simply an archaic transfer of the notion of human manufacture to a deity, due to a simplistic view of the world and lack of knowledge of how biology and living organisms come about. We shall explore this in the next section.

(Continued on Part II)