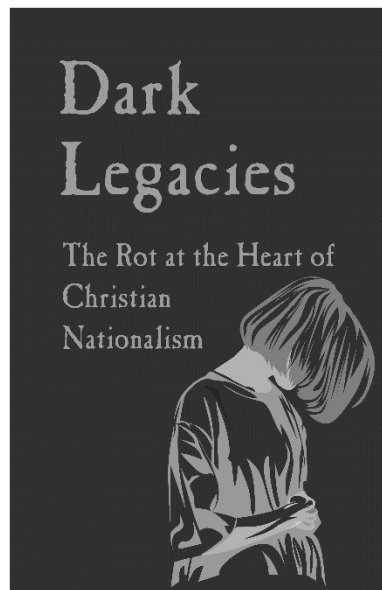


# Dark Legacies

The Rot at the Heart  
of Christian Nationalism



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# Biblical Heroes

All Jews and Christians have heard good things about Noah, Abraham, Lot, David, Moses, and Paul. Here are some of the lesser known, but more revealing, details.

## Obnoxious Noah

Stories of a great flood can be found in the folk tales of almost every culture, so it could be possible that there was a time when much of Earth's current landmass was temporarily underwater. Exactly what historical time that was, however, is questionable as there is no "official" record of any such phenomena, and "the Egyptian civilization was in a particularly flourishing state at [the Biblical flood] time and was building its pyramids."<sup>1</sup>

There are many reasons why we also must assume that much of the story of Noah's ark is fabrication. One reason is the clear impossibility of Noah collecting a pair of every species when many species only live above the Arctic Circle, deep in the jungles of South America, or in the Australian outback. Another reason is the preposterous size of an ark capable of holding — and storing a year's provisions for — every known species. There are over 250,000 species of beetles alone! But let us chalk all that up to the natural tendency for storytellers to exaggerate, and consider instead what sort of man God is said to have elected to save the human race.

For being the first leader mentioned in the Bible, there is precious little written about Noah. According to Genesis, Noah was the son of Lamech and the grandson of Methuselah. At the age of 500, he had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. When the Almighty decided to start the world over again, he chose Noah (now 600 years old) to carry on the human race because "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generations." [Gen 6:9]

One of the strangest stories in the Bible occurs after the flood business is over. Noah became a farmer. "He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness." [Gen 9:20-23]

Now be sure to get this picture clearly in your mind: A man walks unknowingly into a tent and can't help but spy his 602-year-old father passed out on the bed in just his birthday suit. (A rather ill-fitting suit, to be sure.) He immediately tells his brothers, who cover up the old man after walking backwards into the tent.

And does Noah awaken and thank his sons for covering up an old man in need?

Not exactly.

"When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.'" [Gen 9:24]

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This wins the award for being the most ungrateful and outrageous statement in the entire Bible (perhaps even in all of the world's literature.) A man gets drunk of his own accord, removes his own clothes, passes out, and then complains about what his son has done to him! What harm had been done ... other than to Ham's poor eyes? And, to top it off with even greater lunacy, Noah curses not his son Ham, but Ham's son Canaan (Noah's grandson), who had absolutely nothing to do with the whole affair.

What possible reason could the author of Genesis have for writing such a preposterous story? Could the fact that "Canaan" is the name for the land long coveted by the Hebrews have anything to do with this?

## Amoral Abraham

Ten generations after Noah, one of Shem's descendants was named Abram (no, this isn't a typo, later his name was lengthened to Abraham) who was destined to become the founder of the Hebrew nation. Prior to Abram, the terms "Hebrew" and "Jew" had no meaning. The Bible tells us nothing about the 75 years of his life before he was chosen by God to father a great nation, nor does God offer any reason for his selection. Perhaps if we observe how he acts as he wanders about the land, Abram's special qualities will become evident.

At God's urging, Abram takes his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, and all of their possessions, households, and servants, and begins a long trip. First to Canaan, and then, because there was a famine, down into Egypt.

Abram is afraid that the Egyptians will kill him and take his wife because she is so beautiful, so he lies and gets his wife to lie and say she is his sister. [Gen 12:12-13] The Pharaoh does indeed lust after Sarai and takes her as a wife. Abram then lives very comfortably in Egypt off the largess of the royal family. God, however, doesn't much like an Egyptian copulating with Abram's wife. Does He punish Abram for his cowardice, his lies, his pimping for his wife? Does He inflict Sarai with a venereal disease or make her pregnant? Of course not. God, in what becomes a typical Jehovian fashion, sends great plagues upon the house of Pharaoh.

When Pharaoh discovers that he has been duped, he kicks Abram out of Egypt, but lets him take his wife and all his possessions. Thus, Abram, who was well off when he entered Egypt, is a very rich man when he exits.

Sarai seems unable to conceive, so she suggests that Abram (age 86) take another wife, namely Sarai's Egyptian handmaid, name of Hagar. This Abram does, and Hagar bears him a son, Ishmael. [Gen 16]

Thirteen years later, God again visits Abram, changes his name to Abraham (and Sarai to Sarah), and reiterates his prediction that Abraham will be the father of multitudes who will get to live in the land of Canaan. In exchange, all God asks is that Abraham and all the males in his family and among his servants and slaves become circumcised. Even though no reason is given for what must have seemed an extremely odd request, Abraham immediately complies and spends the rest of the day mutilating the penises of every man within his household. [Gen 17]

Once again, Abraham goes on the road, this time ending up in the kingdom of Gerar. Once again, he sought favor from the king by passing off Sarah as his sister. And once again, the king takes Sarah to be his wife. Only this time, God is kind enough to inform the king about Abraham's deception before the marriage is consummated. The king, in apparent appreciation for not being killed as well as deceived, gives Abraham his wife back, along with sheep, oxen, male and female slaves, and a thousand pieces of

silver. And thus, Abraham becomes an exceedingly wealthy man, mostly by pimping for his wife and deceiving heads of state.

## Loathsome Lot

Few who are not regulars at church or temple would be able to describe Abraham as the father of the Hebrews, yet almost every Westerner knows the story of Abraham's nephew, Lot. Probably this is because the graphically intense image of Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt is so unforgettable.

There is actually very little said about Lot in the Bible, but little things sometimes come in lurid packages.

You might have learned in Sunday School that Lot was the only good man in the degenerate city of Sodom; but your teacher likely rushed past the salacious parts.

Lot was living in Sodom when two angels — who apparently were physically indistinguishable from normal men — entered the city to see if its citizens were as evil as had been reported. When Lot sees the strangers arrive, he offers them food and shelter, which they accept. They eat and prepare for bed, but then a most fantastic event occurs: all the males in the city, "both young and old, to the last man," surround the house and demand that Lot "bring [the strangers] out to us, so that we may know them." [Gen 9:1-8] The implication here is that the Sodomites desired to have homosexual relations with the strangers. But there were only two strangers, and there must have been hundreds (if not thousands) of men outside Lot's door. This scenario boggles the mind even more than all those millions of critters crammed into Noah's boat.

Lot's reaction is no less outrageous. He says to the mob, "Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men." Yes, you read it right; Lot — the most morally upright man in town — offers his virgin daughters to the crowd in place of the strangers!

The epilogue to this story is rarely mentioned. In it, Lot and his two daughters are living in a cave. Since the daughters have no man around to satisfy their reproductive desires, they conspire to get their father drunk and have sex with him. Apparently, the alcohol of the time did not have the inhibiting influence on male sexual performance that it does today, for they are successful in this escapade ... two nights in a row.

We never are told the type and extent of the sins of Sodom that prompted God to destroy that city, but if, by comparison, Lot was considered a good guy, then the rest of the townsfolk must have been true scum.

As for all the little children that got barbequed in God's cleansing fire, we can only speculate about their moral character.

## Despicable David

David was the most revered king of the Jews, as is shown by the Gospel writers conflicting attempts to prove that Jesus was of David's lineage. David was a young soldier from Bethlehem when he performed his best-remembered feat, slaying Goliath with only a sling and a stone. The Bible relates little else extraordinary about him that would explain his future fame. Here are a few items you may not recall clearly.

Once, when David was encamped with his exiled band of outlaws and misfits, a filthy man in torn clothing staggers into camp, falls to his knees in deference to David, and tells this story. He (the messenger is never named) had been fighting alongside the Hebrews when he came upon their king, Saul,

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seriously wounded and in peril of being captured by the Philistines. Saul calls out to the man in his pain and says, "slay me, for anguish has seized me, and yet my life still lingers." [2Sam 1:9] Seeing that Saul will not live much longer anyway, the man complies with his king's orders, thus saving Saul from a more painful and shameful death at the hands of his enemies. The man then escapes through enemy lines to bring the news of Israel's defeat. He also brings the king's crown, which he believes should now belong to David.

And can you guess how David shows his appreciation for this heroism and homage? David has the man killed. ... He does, however, keep the crown.

[For those Bible readers whose sense of justice is offended by this story, an entirely different version of Saul's death has been thoughtfully included in 1 Samuel, chapter 31.]

A few years later, David, now king of all Israel, peers out from the roof of his house and spies his neighbor, the beautiful Bathsheba, taking a bath. Overcome with lust, David has his troops seize Bathsheba and bring her to his bedchamber where he "lay with her" (as the Bible so quaintly puts it), and gets her pregnant. Now Bathsheba's husband, whose name was Uriah, was away soldiering. David sends for him and gives him a sealed message to take back to his commanding officer. The message read, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." [2Sam 11:2-15] And that's just what happened.

Thus did King David commit adultery, and thus did King David betray the trust of his army and commit the foul and gutless murder of his loyal soldier.

Now, to be fair about this, I should note that God was not pleased with these events and meted out justice as only God could—when the baby was born, He killed it.

As for David, he added Bathsheba to his harem and fathered another child by her, a fellow named Solomon.

As bloodthirsty and treacherous as the Hebrews were, we still think of them as far more civilized than those cultures, such as the Inca, whose gods demanded human sacrifices. Consider, however, the following story. During David's reign there was a famine for three years. God tells David that the cause of the famine is the "blood guilt on Saul and on his house" [2Sam 21:1] (*i.e.* the kings of Israel) for the murder of certain Gibeonites. David asks the Gibeonites what would remove this debt, and they say the death of seven of the sons of the murderer. So, David gives these seven men up, and the Gibeonites hang them "on the mountain of the Lord."

If these killings only appeased the Gibeonites, the story would be but one more drop of mayhem in the ocean of atrocities that make up the Old Testament. Note, however, that in His pleasure at the deaths of the seven sons, God immediately ends the famine. This is not exactly the same as splitting people open on an alter to appease the gods, but the victims are not likely to appreciate the distinction. And so, the skeleton of human sacrifice lurks behind the gilded robes in good King David's royal closet.

## Monstrous Moses

Talk about inauspicious beginnings, the very first event related in the story of Moses' adult life is his murder of an Egyptian who he chances upon in the act of beating up on a Hebrew. Fearing punishment, Moses flees to Midian, marries a local girl, and lives in peace and plenty until the age of eighty. Then

God, apparently thinking that this fugitive killer is the ideal man to help slaughter Egyptians, calls to him from a burning bush.

These days, most people think of the story of Moses and the Pharaoh in terms of epic, Technicolor® movies, especially *The Ten Commandments*. In this version of the story, the Hebrews were portrayed as severely oppressed slaves, ruthlessly starved, beaten, and forced to build pyramids until Moses finally managed to convince the heartless Pharaoh to set them free. But as so often happens in the entertainment world, the movie version differs widely from the original book. Of course, very few people bother to read the book. Who can blame them? Exodus is a long, poorly written, difficult-to-follow story. Therefore, I shall save you the effort of wading through the original by presenting the basic plot here. You are encouraged, however, to check these facts against the original should you have any doubts about this distillation.

To begin with, the Hebrews were not slaves in Egypt. You might recall the story of Joseph—the one with the nice coat—who was sold by his brothers into slavery. [Gen 37] Joseph ended up in Egypt and, after some initial tough times, so impressed the Pharaoh with his dream interpretations that he was appointed ruler of the country—you just can't get any further away from slavery than that. Using his new powers, Joseph invited his father, Jacob (also known as Israel) and his eleven brothers and their families to come down to Egypt where they could better survive the famine that they were all suffering through. Joseph got the Pharaoh to give his family "the best of the land of Egypt." [Gen 45:18]

Here, the twelve tribes of Israel—as the families of the twelve sons of Jacob became known—lived for 430 years. In that time, their number grew to something between two and three million people. (600,000 adult males plus women, children, the elderly, servants, and slaves.) [Ex 12:37] They raised their own livestock and other animals; grew their own crops on their own land (the "best in Egypt"); had their own craftsmen; and enjoyed a varied and well-seasoned diet. [Num 11:5 & 18] And, they lived in houses so similar to the average Egyptian residence that they had to mark their front doors to ensure they would survive "Passover."

Towards the end of their stay, the Hebrews had grown "too many and too mighty" [Ex 9] and, it is said, the Egyptian leaders were afraid of them and had begun to try and oppress them. As if to justify the Hebrew's deceit in arranging their departure, chapter 5 of Exodus tells of the Pharaoh increasing the labor involved in the making of bricks. Apparently, this was written by someone who thought it possible to turn over a million well-off men and women into downtrodden laborers virtually overnight. Or perhaps the Hebrews had *their* slaves make the bricks.

Anyway, when Moses said "let my people go" he wasn't pleading for the release of a few exploited slaves, he was asking the Pharaoh to relinquish a good portion of the population and wealth of the Egyptian nation.

As leader, it would undoubtedly have been one of the Pharaoh's primary jobs to keep the country safe, powerful, and in one piece; so, it was natural to resist Moses' request for succession. Think of President Lincoln's response to the proposed "exodus" of the Southern States of America in 1860. But, even if the Pharaoh had been inclined to let his guests of four centuries depart in peace, he simply couldn't do so because the game was rigged against him from the beginning.

When God first spoke to Moses—from the burning bush on Mount Horeb [a.k.a. Mt. Sinai]—he was very clear about his intent to prevent the Pharaoh from giving-in to the Hebrews' demands: "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go." [Ex 4:21 & 7:3]

And that's what happened; each time the Pharaoh told Moses that the Hebrews could leave, God forced him to change his mind. In other words, God had planned to torment the Egyptians with all sorts



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of grotesque plagues, and the Pharaoh was just a puppet God used to provide an excuse for drawing the torment out. The purpose of all this is stated clearly by God: "that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your son's son how I have made sport of the Egyptians." [Ex 10:1-2]

### More on Egypt

Remembering that most all Egyptians (millions of them) were innocent of any oppression of their Hebrew neighbors, and that the Egyptian ruler was forcibly prevented from stopping the spectacle of plagues, consider the following details: God told Moses to lie to the Pharaoh, asking only for a few days in the country to perform sacrifices, although he planned all along to leave Egypt permanently. God told Moses to have the Hebrews "borrow" gold and jewels from their Egyptian friends and neighbors,<sup>2</sup> with no intention of returning it. God poisoned the country's only river and killed all the fish. God killed all of the Egyptian's cattle, along with their "horses, asses, camels, herds, and flocks." [Ex 9:3-6] God infested the land with frogs, gnats, flies, and locusts. God inflicted painful and debilitating boils on the skin of all Egyptians. God sent a hail and lightning storm that destroyed all growing crops and killed all the slaves and servants working in the fields.

And, for the grand finale, on the infamous night celebrated today as Passover, God murdered the oldest child of every non-Hebrew family in Egypt. (Note that most families would lose several members, because many of the grandparents and parents would be the oldest children of their respective parents.)

As a sort of encore, a few days later, God made the Pharaoh take what was left of the Egyptian army out to be drowned.

Thusly the god of Abraham did make sport of the Egyptians.

This is a story of deceit and thievery, of treachery and torture, of a god who murders thousands of innocent children (and fetuses) just to make a name for himself. This is the most horrifying and evil story ever imagined by man.

And, without doubt, it *was* imagined. Not only is it an affront to reason and common sense, it is internally inconsistent (the cattle are killed on three separate occasions, [11Ex 9:6, 9:20, 12:29] the dead horses manage to pull chariots, [Ex 9:3, 14:9] frogs swarm from waters poisoned a week before, [Ex 7-22, 8:6] etc.), and nowhere in the vast and detailed records that the Egyptians kept of their own history is there any mention of such momentous events.

That last point begs emphasis: **Nowhere in the vast and detailed records that the Egyptians kept of their own history is there any mention of an emigration of Jews.**

### Moses Exposed

After helping to destroy a good deal of the people and infrastructure of Egypt, Moses leads his tribe of millions, "equipped for battle," [Ex 13:18] across the desert, intending to destroy a good deal of the people and infrastructure of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, [Ex 3:8] whose misfortune it is to be the current residents of Canaan, a land supposedly promised to the Hebrews. It seems that God used to be the god of this land, but its occupants failed to follow his orders, so He has abandoned them and chosen the Hebrews to get vengeance. If the Hebrews follow God's orders precisely, they will be empowered to vanquish the larger Canaanite armies and live forever in the land of milk and honey.

As the Hebrews traveled, they acted more like an army on the prowl than a bunch of refugees seeking the promised land. They avoided the stronger nations and attacked the weaker ones. And when the Hebrews attacked, the result wasn't pretty:

"And the Lord God hearkened to the voice of Israel, and gave over the Canaanites [the kingdom of Arad]; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities; so the name of the place was called `Destruction.' " [Num 21:3]

"And Israel slew [the king of the Amorites] with the edge of the sword and took possession of his land." [Num 21:24]

"So they slew [the king of Bashan], and his sons, and all his people, until there was not one survivor left to him; and they possessed his land." [Num 21:35]

The most telling conquest of all was Moses' last. Forty-some years after he left Midian, Moses returns to destroy the people that had given him peaceful shelter. "They warred against Midian, as the Lord commanded Moses, and slew every male. . . . took captive the women of Midian and their little ones; and they took as booty all their cattle, their flocks, and all their goods." [Num 31:7+] And [pay attention now, this is the highlight] when the soldiers returned to Moses, **he berated them for allowing the women and children to live**, ordered that all male children and all non-virgin females should be killed, and gave the virgins to the conquering soldiers for their sexual sport (after the priests had taken their share).

Other than all the killing and raping, the grandest moment in the Israelite's trek is the stopover at Mt. Horeb to pick up some advice from God himself. Unfortunately for the peripatetic masses, all they get to see is a huge, dark cloud hovering near the mountaintop; Moses alone gets the privilege of meeting the boss in person — and he only sees a bright light. God, according to Moses, had warned the Hebrews "do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death." [Ex 19:12] Instead, "the people stood afar off" and only listened to God's voice, which sounded to them like thunder. Fortunately, Moses was around to interpret, otherwise the world would have missed out, not only on the ten commandments, but on about 100 other ordinances including specifying the proper stone [Ex 20:25] for building altars and the protocol for selling a daughter into slavery. [Ex 21:7]

### **More Heart Hardening**

The Pharaoh was not the only Biblical character prevented from doing right just so God could inflict greater abuse. When Joshua was wiping out all the people of Canaan, the bad book tells us: "There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel . . . For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be utterly destroyed, and should receive no mercy, but be exterminated, as the Lord commanded." [Josh 11:20]

Then there was the time when the sons of Eli were abusing the privileges of priesthood by having sex with their female assistants. (Yes, such practices have always been with us.) Eli finds out and warns his sons to stop this behavior, but "they would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the Lord to slay them." [1Sam 2:25]

The Hebrews went so far with this excuse that they blamed God for their own failure to follow His doctrines: "O Lord, why dost thou make us err from thy ways and harden our heart, so that we fear thee not?" [Is 63:17] Reacting to this sort of thinking, American patriot Thomas Paine, asked: "What can be greater blasphemy than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?"<sup>3</sup>

Time and again, God either forces people to do the wrong thing or prevents them from doing the right thing, just so he can make a more splendid display of power.

Who was He trying so desperately to impress?

Now, expending all this energy and time to criticize fictional characters may strike some as equivalent to arguing the strengths of Superman versus Batman — unproductive and irrelevant. But the point is that those who wrote the Old Testament books, and all the Jews, Muslims, and Christians who since

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have revered and promoted these books, thought that these depraved characters were heroic, and their terrible deeds worth celebrating. Many millions still think that way today.

## Perverse Paul

Despite their dedication to raping women not of their tribes, the early Jews had a remarkably permissive attitude towards sex as a natural and pleasurable activity. Dying in the virgin state was considered unfortunate rather than desirable.<sup>4</sup> A man could have as many wives as he could manage and have consensual sex with as many unmarried girls as he wished. (“Adultery” meant having sex with another’s Jew’s wife; thereby violating that man’s property rights.) Some teachers even believed that, upon his death, a man would be called upon “to account to God for every pleasure he had failed to enjoy.”<sup>5</sup>

And then, along came a guy called Paul.

Although not exactly a “hero” of the Bible, Paul is the key character in its later pages. Without him, the book’s impact would be far less today.

Influenced by the dualism of oriental religions, which were then spreading throughout the Roman Empire, Paul had an extremely negative, pessimistic view of mankind in general, and sex in particular. He believed that any physical pleasure interfered with spiritual development and that, since the cataclysmic end of the world was imminent, men should put away all things worldly to prepare themselves for passage through the Pearly Gates.

At first, Paul’s extremist views earned some credence as folks bought into the idea that the sky was about to fall, so they really hadn’t much to lose by sacrificing a bit of pleasure. By the time it became obvious that the apocalypse was *not* imminent, the Christian leaders were learning how much power and control they could gain by convincing the populace that man’s natural desires were sinful. Thus, the twisted teachings of Paul and his compatriots were the transient event in the desexualization of western religion — the disturbance in the force that triggered an avalanche of repression, persecutions, killings, hysteria, and mayhem engineered by the Christian fathers.

Serving as a coadjutant to ‘the physical is inferior’ idea, was the “women are inferior” idea. Paul is infamous for comments such as: “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” [1Tim 2:11-13]

I will continue that line of thought in the chapter on Biblical Legacies.

# Biblical Values

These days, we often hear that children must be taught “Biblical Values” and our politics and culture should be grounded in a “Biblical world view.” One cannot help but wonder if those promoting such ideas have ever actually read their Bibles! An unbiased look shows us that the Bible endorses, promotes, and often glorifies all of the following undesirable activities.

**Genocide** – Armies are led by God to slaughter entire cities of men, women, and children. Sometimes, the Almighty does the gruesome job all by Himself. (Being as more than a few of the women would have been pregnant, that makes God a most prolific killer of fetuses.)

**Murder** – An Israelite male brings a foreign woman into his tent for a bit of lovemaking. Unfortunately, he is spied by a fellow named Phinehas, who sneaks in with a spear and pierces both man and woman "through her body." (She must have been on top.) As a reward for committing this double murder, Phinehas is given a "covenant of peace" and his descendants are granted "perpetual priesthood."  
[Num 25:6-13]

Without any sense of a wrong being committed, the Bible’s authors tell of this incident in the life of the prophet Elisha. He was walking to Bethel when "some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him saying, `Go up, you baldhead!' And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys."  
[2Kings 2:23-24]

**Thievery** – The Lord commands people to ask their kind neighbors for loans of money and jewelry, and instructs them not to repay.

**Adultery** – Having more than one sexual partner was both an acceptable and admired state for Jewish men, especially royals – king Solomon supposedly (exhaustively) enjoyed the favors of some 300 wives in addition to his harem of 700. [1Kings 11:3] Soldiers were encouraged — without regard for their own marital status — to take the virginity of feminine conquests.

The bringer of what came to be known as “Mosaic Law” was a man who often practiced, encouraged, and ordered murder, thievery, and rape — and then blamed his actions on his god.

And so, it is clear that the rules against killing, stealing, and adultery were only meant to protect the property of Jewish men. These, and the rest of the so-called Ten Commandments were never intended to be applied universally. Therefore, it is disingenuous, at best, to use “Thy shalt not kill” as a rallying cry against abortions, capital punishment, or war — none of which are in conflict with biblical values.

**Betrayal** – A king lusts for the wife of one of his soldiers, so he has that soldier abandoned at the battlefield where he is sure to be killed. Then the king rapes the woman. All of which does nothing to tarnish his reputation as a great king.

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**Sex Trafficking** – A man passes his wife off as his sister and profits greatly when the king adds her to his harem. Years later, the husband pimps her again to another ruler. This slimeball is now honored as the father of the Hebrew nation!

Another man offers his own virgin daughters to a large crowd for their carnal sport, simply to save his reputation for hospitality. He is touted as the most moral man in his city.

**Repression of Women** – Females are property, first of their fathers and then of their husbands. Not only are they not allowed to vote, they are not even counted as citizens. The only opinions they may voice are those of their mates.

**Intolerance of Dissent** – All authority over others is granted by God. Those who defy any leader's God-given authority are to be killed; this includes citizens who defy their government and children who defy their parents.

**Justification of Slavery** – The enslavement of foreigners is a common practice, supported by divine decree. No biblical character — in either testament — ever suggests otherwise. Throughout the centuries since, the Bible has often been quoted in defense of slavery.

**Nepotism** – The organization established by Moses has become the envy of every tyrant, to wit:

- Only the Levite tribe could come near the holy tent.
- Only Aaron and his sons could enter the tent and commune with God.
- The other tribes of Israel had to support the Levites.
- Only Moses heard God announce these rules.
- Moses was a Levite. Aaron was Moses' brother.

Any questions?

**Racial Discrimination** – "You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a people holy to the Lord." [Deut 14:21]

And so, virtually every conceivable crime and dastardly act is not only described, but honored within the pages of this purportedly holy book. On close examination it turns out that "Biblical Values" are the opposite of those needed in any civilized society.

## Decalogue Redux

Being as a majority of the followers of the three main western religions would bring up some version of the "Ten Commandments" when asked about biblical values, I shall end this chapter with a "Cliffs Notes" version of the ten — actually nine<sup>6</sup> — commandments:

1. No other Gods
2. No idols
3. No swearing on the holy name
4. No work on 7<sup>th</sup> day
5. Honor dad and mom
6. No killing
7. No adultery
8. No stealing
9. No lying
10. No envy

The first four of these are all about the Jewish priesthood protecting their turf (and their livelihood) from outside competition. This is said to have started some 3,200 years ago when Moses granted his brother Aaron exclusive rights to “access” God, and is of no consequence to any truth seeker.

The fifth commandment is rather innocuous — providing, that is, that the parents in question are not irresponsible drug addicts, violent abusers, child pornographers, etc.

The tenth (Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s whatever.) is one of the earliest examples of a law that is intended to criminalize normal behavior; thereby laying a guilt trip on an entire population. In a much later writing, Matthew has Jesus say: “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” [Mt 5:28] These inanities have vastly increased the level of shame and guilt throughout the western world, feelings which can be alleviated, it is said, by making large donations to the priesthood.

Commandments 6 thru 9 may seem straightforward and applicable to modern life, until one realizes that their authors meant them in a very restricted and jingoistic way. Lying to foreigners, stealing from Gentiles, killing non-Jewish men, women, and children, were all acts glorified throughout the Old Testament, both before and long after the story of Moses delivering the tablets. And, to men who had multiple wives and concubines, adultery meant using another Jew’s property without permission; raping the women of conquered tribes was both expected and often enjoined.

Do not take any of this as an indication that it is okay to kill, steal, or otherwise hurt your fellow men and women. The point is that citing any part of the Old Testament as a moral standard is disingenuous at best.

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# Biblical Fantasies

To tell a fantastic story in a believable way, it is useful to act sincere and set it in the proper time and place.

**The Time** – It is always safer to write about non-contemporaneous events, so that there are no surviving witnesses to challenge your version. The events described in Old Testament stories supposedly took place hundreds – sometimes millions – of years prior to being written down.

**The Place** – We have all read novels in which the streets, parks, and other infrastructure of a city were accurately described; but we are not thereby convinced that the characters and activities portrayed are also real. Any good storyteller will incorporate as much factual material as feasible in order to make his tale more convincing. Ignoring this principle, many archeologists, both professional and amateur, love to trumpet discoveries of biblical locations as if they constituted proof of events supposedly having taken place there.

Of course, distance alone does not prove falsity. We can be confident in the untruth of the tales of Noah's ark and Moses' plagues because they contain impossibilities *and* lack corroborating evidence. Likewise, the following examples of biblical baloney.

## Garden Parties

Every culture has a creation myth, except the Judeo-Christian culture ... it has two creation myths. The earliest is told in Genesis 2 through 4. The other was picked up later and tacked on to the front of the Old Testament, as Genesis 1.

Some claim, and the ignorant sometimes believe, that the two stories can be reconciled one to the other, but that is impossible. Consider that in the first account God made the animals before He made humans (both male and female simultaneously), [Gen 1:24-27] while in the second account God is said to have made man (male only) first, then the animals, and then woman. [Gen 2:7, 19-22]

Why, you may well wonder, it is worthwhile to critique such an obviously speculative work, one that contains numerous affronts to astronomy, biology, and common sense? There are two reasons. First, because there is wisdom inherent in the tale that is worth some elaboration. And second, because the story provides the basis for what, in later philosophies, would be called "original sin," and original sin is indispensable to politicians, for without it we mortals would not be in need of salvation.

Of course, you've known this story since you were a child: Adam and Eve, the only two people on earth, are living in a beautiful garden that God had planted for them in Eden. Satan lies to Eve and gets her to disobey God by eating an apple and sharing it with Adam; God retaliates by kicking them both out of the garden, thus revoking their immortality and introducing pain, suffering, and death into the world. Right?

Well, sort of right. Let's go over it again, just to clear up a few misconceptions.

After God has made woman and placed her in the garden with man, we are told that "the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed." To many people today — certainly to the millions of practicing nudists — this seems a pretty silly statement; why should they be ashamed? But to the ancient Jews who wrote this account, being seen naked was a terrible violation. This is evident in their numerous and strict laws on the subject and is vividly illustrated in the reaction of Noah when he realizes that his adult son has seen him naked. [Gen 9:20-24] These nomadic people lived in tents with little privacy and nothing between them and the vast deserts but their robes, being naked meant being uncivilized — no better than animals. Therefore, to state that the first humans were not ashamed of being seen naked was the strongest possible way for a Jewish writer to emphasize that the first people on Earth were completely uncivilized, like animals, with no sense of right and wrong.

Next, we are introduced to the serpent. Note, that there is no reference to an evil entity; The Devil was not invented until early Christians decided that an unholy power was required to explain the presence of evil in the world. Up until then, the Jewish god, later named YHWH, was quite adept at sending plagues and slaughtering the innocents all by Himself.

The serpent asks the woman if God has told her not to eat of any of the trees in the garden. She replies that God told her not to eat of the tree in the middle of the garden, "lest you die." (Note: the word "apple" does not appear in the story.) The serpent replies: "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The serpent has gotten a lot of bad press for making this statement, and perhaps he deserves some of it, but, in fact, everything he said was true! Neither the man nor the woman died, their eyes were opened, and they did come to know good and evil.

God becomes very angry when He finds out about this infraction, and He hands out curses all around. The serpent must thereafter crawl on its belly and eat dust. God says He will "greatly multiply" the woman's pain in childbirth. And He tells the man that he will have to work for a living "until you return to the ground."

And then God says, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever," [Gen 3:22] He sends Adam and Eve out of the garden. Note here, that there is no indication that Adam and Eve were going to live forever in the garden (and lost their immortality when they got kicked out). In fact, it seems that they were forced to leave precisely to prevent them from becoming immortal (by eating from the tree of life).

There is much high strangeness in this story. What kind of God can't see the man and woman hiding in the garden and has to call out "Where are you?" How could the pain of childbirth be multiplied when it hadn't been experienced up to that moment? And, most strange, indeed, what is meant by the phrase "become like one of us"? This is carrying the "editorial we" or the "royal we" much too far. Clearly, the reader is to understand that God is speaking to His peers, whoever they might be.

As interesting as such puzzles are, the overriding question is: What does it mean to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Many people, especially puritanical preachers, have muddied the issue with references to sexuality. This is understandable; if you can't (or don't want to) explain something, just imply that it involves sex, and most people won't question you any further on the subject.

But sex is never mentioned in the story. Neither is lust. Or even love. There is no talk about bodily functions or emotional urges at all.

In essence, the story of the Garden of Eden is saying that when humans learn to distinguish between good and evil (that is, when they gain the mental capacity to foresee and evaluate the future impact of



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their actions), they lose their ability to live as the animals do, free of responsibility, duty, and the burdensome knowledge of their own mortality. In other words, wisdom brings painful awareness of vulnerability (*i.e.*, nakedness) and of death.

Once upon a time, we lived in paradise, blissfully unaware of moral choices, ethical dilemmas, free radicals, and cholesterol. Then we got bitten by the wisdom snake, and we opened our eyes to see the often-troubling consequences of our actions, so we started worrying, and we stopped smelling the roses, and went out to work for our bread.

And what of the pain of childbirth? There is a direct physical link here. Wisdom requires more developed brains, which necessitate larger heads, which stretch the birth canal beyond its design specifications.

The opening tales of the Bible are obviously products of the imaginations of people who had no way of knowing how mankind developed on Earth. Yet, they occasionally reveal remarkable insight and intellect. The real problems stem from the misinterpretations of priests and politicians who developed and preach the concept of "original sin."

Without a generalized, inherent sin, mankind is in no need of universal salvation. It may well be that we can improve our heavenly lot by following the teaching of this or that master; but Adam and Eve's eating disorder does not burden us with the need to be saved — by Jesus or anyone else.

## Sun of a Hitch

*Then spoke Joshua to the Lord, in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the men of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand thou still at Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Ai'jalon." And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since. [Josh 10:12-14]*

Of all the impossible occurrences related in the Bible stories, this one is the most outrageous. Its author clearly was not omniscient, believing that the sun revolved around our planet, so that God could stop it in its tracks without harmful result. We now know that it is Earth that rotates, so that people and things near the equator are always speeding eastward at about a thousand miles per hour. For the sun to seemingly pause in the heavens, Earth's rotation would have to stop, causing everything not fastened down to be violently crushed into everything stationary.

That would, no doubt wipe out the Amorites, but most of life on Earth would also be obliterated. Whatever did survive the immediate crush would never endure the resulting shifts of Earth's tectonic plates.

The Catholic Church's refusal to acknowledge Galileo's proofs that the Earth went around the Sun was based on this preposterous tale. And the Inquisition sentenced the pioneering astronomer to life in prison for his temerity.

Another heavy price paid for taking the Bible seriously.

## The Smallest Big-Fish Story

What image comes to mind when you hear the story of Jonah and the whale?

The pertinent passages are:

*And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

\* \* \*

*Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, ... And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. [Jon 1:17-2:10]*

Many folks, especially fans of Disney movies, will first picture Pinocchio and Geppetto trapped within the cavernous confines of Monstro. Not only are these characters able to move around, but they even build a fire — which causes the whale to sneeze them out.

The *Book of Jonah* is one of the shortest in the Bible; it is also one of the best known but least critiqued. We all know that fish, no matter how gigantic, do not have hospitable bellies; and that a man would suffocate in minutes if he could be swallowed. Somehow, though, the cute images evoked by the animated *Pinocchio* distract us from seriously considering the biblical version.

*Jonah* perfectly demonstrates the ignorance of the Bible's authors, be they men or gods.

## Star and Solstice

There are two biblical accounts of the birth of Yeshua ben Joseph (or "Jesus" in Americanese). According to Bible scholars, the earliest was written in the book of Matthew at least 65 years after the event; almost a century had passed before Luke wrote his version. Having no personal contact with any of the characters in their stories, both authors had to rely on weaving together hearsay passed down by the intervening generations, along with heavy doses of traditions from other religions. The resulting stories of the "First Christmas" are beautiful, inspiring, and almost entirely fallacious.

Other than the basics that Jesus was born of Mary in Bethlehem, the tales of *Matthew* and *Luke* have very little in common. *Matthew* tells of astrologers seeing a star and giving gifts to the babe; *Luke* tells of shepherds seeing angels. *Matthew* has the newborn in a house; *Luke* places him in a stable. *Matthew* claims that the family fled from Bethlehem to Egypt in fear for their lives; *Luke* states that they went to Jerusalem after having Jesus circumcised and then went home to Nazareth. This latter contradiction is absolute and cannot be reconciled in any sane manner. These are minor flaws, however, compared to the census, the star, and the slaughter.

### **Luke's taxation/census**

*Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus to register all the empire for taxes. This was the first registration, taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David. He went to be registered with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him, and who was expecting a child. [Lk 2:1-6]*

There are at least four faults in this accounting.

Fault #1 — There is no record that Caesar Augustus, or any other Roman dignitary issued such a decree, and the Roman bureaucracy kept good records of matters concerning money.

Fault #2 — The governor named in the story, Quirinius, was not appointed until after Herod's death.

Fault #3 — Uprooting families throughout the province and having them all travel simultaneously to the paternal birthplace would be economically disruptive and politically impossible, not to mention unnecessary and downright stupid. When you take a census, you send the census takers to the people, you don't have the people come to the census takers.

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Fault #4 — In the event that such an insanity did take place, only men would need to take part because wives in Judea neither voted nor paid taxes. Is Luke asking his readers to believe that Joseph put his about-to-give-birth wife on a donkey and traveled over 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem just because he enjoyed her company? Even in the super-patriarchal, women-are-property culture of ancient Palestine, no man would risk the life of a coming child in such a reckless action. ... Especially if that man had been told that the child was male.

### **Matthew's Following Star**

*In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men [astrologers] from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage. ... When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. [Mt 2:1-11]*

A 6th century Latin text both numbered and named what Matthew simply refers to as an unspecified number of magi or astrologers. The carol *We Three Kings*, written in 1857 for a Christmas pageant at the New York City Theological Seminary, took its characters from that text.

Many people have tried very hard to find a reasonable celestial explanation for Matthew's Christmas star — supernovas, planetary conjunctions, comets, etc. — none of their theories really hold water. And, even though the Romans, the Egyptians, and the Chinese were very good at both watching the heavens and keeping records, no one noted any event that fits the description.

The magi are first quoted as saying that they "observed the rising of his star." This is a typical astrological reference to a natural movement of the heavens. The ascendant star being given royal significance in the same way that a conjunction of Mars and Neptune might be interpreted as especially ominous. Currently, though, no records have been found indicating that the Persians thought that any particular alignment of heavenly bodies would signify the birth of a new "king of the Jews."

The biggest problem, though, is the sudden change from a cosmic event that could be observed from hundreds of miles away to a local phenomenon close enough to hover over a specific dwelling. Present-day illustrations often picture a celestial light with a tail pointing downward to illuminate the blessed scene. One might be reminded of drawings showing a UFO shining a brilliant beam upon some isolated shack. Of course, we can rule out that explanation. ... Can't we?

### **Slaughter in Bethlehem**

*When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. [Mt 2:16]*

Fortunately for the children of Bethlehem, and for all of humanity, this tale is one of the most clearly fictitious in the Bible. Herod was despised by a large majority of his subjects. Historians of the time took great care to document his every evil deed — and there were enough to fill volumes. Yet in all the records of Herod's crimes, both petty and terrible, there is not one mention of any such murderous decree. It is simply inconceivable that none of Herod's legion of enemies bothered to take note of such a barbarity — like condemning Hitler for being a tyrant without mentioning the war or the Holocaust.

But even if you could conceive of such an oversight, there is no way that any king (even a beloved one) could get away with murdering the newborn sons of everyone — including merchants, princes, soldiers, generals, priests, etc. — residing in a city.

## Why

Such obvious fictions beg the question: Why would Matthew and Luke make up all those strange events? The answer lies in the expectations of their audiences.

The author of *Matthew* was a scribe who identified strongly with his Jewish heritage. He wrote his story to convince Jews that Jesus was the fulfillment of their messianic expectations. He included lots of miraculous events that his Jewish readers would understand as a drawing of parallels to earlier scripture. The tale of Herod's slaughter of newborns, for instance, was meant to evoke images of the Egyptian Pharaoh seeking to kill the infant Moses; thus linking Jesus and Moses in the readers' minds. Matthew thereby was saying something about the character of Jesus rather than giving a factual history.

The author of *Luke* was a gentile who wrote to convince the Romans that Christianity was a natural outgrowth of an accepted and law-abiding religion (Judaism) that included all peoples — as opposed to a dissident cult whose members should be fed to the lions. By the time he was compiling his tale, the story had spread that Jesus was a Galilean, whereas the ancient scriptures suggested that a legitimate messiah should be born in Bethlehem. So, Luke probably invented the taxation decree both as a device to have Jesus born in Bethlehem and to demonstrate that the family of his hero was obedient to Roman law.

Each Gospel author had his own opinion of Jesus and his own ideas to promote. None of the gospels should be taken as historical documents. For the most part, these stories do no harm; but there are two critical exceptions: virginity and salvation. These are discussed in the next chapter.

## Zombies In the Streets

*From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"... Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. [Mt 27:45-53]*

It is all too easy to miss this brief account, and all too tempting to skip over such an obviously bogus one. An unrecorded earthquake is conceivable, one might suppose. A 3-hour solar eclipse, not so much. No citizen noticing all those decaying saints shuffling around the streets of Jerusalem is too ridiculous to consider. Once again Matthew describes miraculous events of which no one else seems to be aware.

## Gullibility Training

A subtle but insidious problem with all of the biblical fantasies is the way they affect the credulity of the ill-informed. As the French philosopher Voltaire has stated: "Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities."<sup>7</sup> Folks whose cognitive skills have been so repressed that they unquestioningly accept the talking snakes, parting seas, pausing suns, virginal conceptions, and all the other fantastical nonsense in the Bible, have lost their immunity to the lies of con artists, hate-mongers, rabble rousers, tyrants, and conspiracy pushers.

It's no wonder that the politically powerful are often the Bible's biggest supporters.

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# Biblical Legacies

None of the foregoing would be worth writing about if it were not for the negative influence this horrid book has had on western culture.

## Peter, Paul, and Never Marry

As Paul's influence grew, other authors began to sing his apocalyptic song, denigrating the physical and praising celibacy. Peter, for example, wrote: "Dear friends, I beg you ... to abstain from the lusts of the flesh which are at war with the soul." [1Pet 2:11]

"Increasingly, virginity became a cardinal virtue, marriage a concession to the weak . . . sex had become an evil necessity for the propagation of the race, to be avoided and denied by the spiritually strong. . . . Even those who were 'consumed with passion' were urged not to marry, to discipline themselves, to mortify the flesh, for the flesh was evil."<sup>8</sup> Such asceticism led inevitably to self-torture, as fanatical monks trekked to desolate locations to mortify their flesh, fasting, flagellating themselves, going without sleep and refusing to wash; some even castrated themselves in order to be freed from the torments of the flesh.

And if the Jewish view that women were the property of their fathers and husbands wasn't repugnant enough, now females came to be considered as temptresses, who were responsible for opening the gates to evil. In general, "Christians of the first few centuries accorded marriage, family life, women, and sex the lowest status of any known culture in the world."<sup>9</sup> Yet the problem wasn't actually the sex act, it was the physical pleasure that might be derived therefrom; a pleasure that, as Mark Twain so succinctly pointed out is: "far and away above all other joys."<sup>10</sup>

Sex became the natural focus of early Christian attempts to protect the spirit from the evil body. The physical was the enemy of the spiritual, thus any pleasure that derived from the body was a serious impediment to the soul's progress. Or, at least, that was the rationale the priests taught the general populace. The true motivation for such teachings had more to do with instilling debilitating guilt complexes throughout the population, the easier to dominate and control them.<sup>11</sup>

No matter the original intent, once Paul and Peter ignited the fire of sexual sin it has burned unabated to this very day as first the Catholics and then the Protestants fanned the flames.

Early on, the church began publishing a series of books known as "penitentials." In some of these, fornication was declared a worse crime than murder. Any attempt to have sex, even kissing a potential partner was forbidden. Even worse, the mere act of *thinking about* having sex called for a penance of 40 days. "Nor was intention a necessary requisite for sin, for involuntary nocturnal emissions were considered sinful: the offender had to rise at once and sing seven penitential psalms, with an additional 30 in the morning."<sup>12</sup> [As if having to change the bed linens wasn't punishment enough!] But, of all the sins of the flesh, the greatest emphasis in the penitentials was on masturbation. Even into the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Aquinas claimed that playing with one's self was a greater sin than fornication. Being as wet

dreams are extremely common, and masturbation even more so, virtually everyone (male and female) fell victim to the guilt imposed by these taboos.

Sex within the marriage union was hardly free of religious restrictions. The insistence by today's Catholic church on religious wedding ceremonies, might obscure the obstructionist attitude of its founders. At first the church, not wanting to open any door to happiness, refused to perform marriage ceremonies at all. When that policy was reversed, and it insisted that only a church ceremony was valid, it began implementing a series of policies designed to make participation in such events more difficult. One approach was to limit the available candidates. Most cultures frown on marrying close relatives, but in the 11th century, the church "extended the ban to first, then to second, and finally to third cousins. But this was not all. So strongly was the notion of sympathetic contagion embedded in the collective psyche, so intense were the anxieties concerning incest, that godfathers and godmothers were included in the ban; next, even the relatives of the priests who had baptized or confirmed an individual were included; finally, even the two adults who had been sponsors to the same child in baptism or confirmation were restrained from ever marrying one another. In some small villages, it is not too farfetched to imagine that these regulations sometimes eliminated every available candidate and condemned individuals to a lifetime of celibacy."<sup>13</sup>

Those fortunate enough to find a suitable partner, could find picking a date problematic, as the church refused to perform ceremonies during various holy days and other times — which could occupy as many as half of the days in the year. Not only the dates, but the church likewise restricted the times, first to daylight, and then by defining "daylight" as between 8 a.m. and noon.

Once a couple had managed to overcome all obstacles to wedlock that the church could raise, they were free to enjoy their conjugal bed, right?

Wrong! The church realized that it had to allow for some sex, lest it run out of parishioners, so it tried to limit opportunities while dampening sexual pleasure to the bare minimum the act requires. At one time in the Dark Ages, "the church forbade sexual relations between man and wife for the equivalent of five months out of every year."<sup>14</sup> And on the permitted days, there was to be no foreplay, no fellatio, no cunnilingus, no anal, and no coitus in any but the "right" and "natural" missionary position.

"The Church's obsession with sex created a self-perpetuating chain reaction that continued to increase through the centuries until it finally burst in the holocaust of the inquisitions, leaving mangled, bloody corpses spread all across the face of Europe."<sup>15</sup>

Today, people sometimes use the label "witch hunt" to denigrate an investigation they feel improper. This is the grossest hyperbole. The social hysteria that swept Europe from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in the name of hunting witches and heretics may be the most horrendous series of events in human history, certainly the worst undertaken by a religious organization. In the name of ridding the world of witches, persons young and old, of both genders, and all social strata were accused, questioned, examined, and tortured, generally while naked. The latter condition is likely the reason that the biggest group of victims consisted of girls in their teens. They were generally charged with having sex with devils. The handbook used to guide the hunters was the *Malleus Malleficarum*, which revealed the startling premise that "All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in women is insatiable."

And so, the gender already blamed for burdening mankind with original sin, came to be accused of satisfying their uncontrolled sexual appetites by consorting with demons. As long as such beliefs are held by those in power, women will never be allowed equal rights.

The gory details of betrayal, false witness, torture, imprisonment, and murder are easily found in other sources; but, for those unfamiliar, here are some sample witch-hunting statistics.

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"In the German community of Lindheim, which in 1664 had a population of 600, 30 persons were executed. In 1589 at Quedlinburg in Saxony, a town of some 12,000 inhabitants, 133 were burned in a single day. In Toulouse the number burned in one day was 400. It was claimed that in some towns there were more witches than houses. According to H. C. Lea, 'a Bishop of Geneva is said to have burned 500 persons within three months, a Bishop of Bamberg 600, a Bishop of Wiirzburg 900.' Eight hundred were condemned, apparently in one body, by the Senate of Savoy. Paramo, in his *History of the Inquisition*, boasts that in a century-and-a-half, from 1404, the Holy Office had burned at least 30,000 witches.

"Nicholas Remy (1530-1612), an inquisitor from Lorraine with 800 executions to his 'credit,' stated, 'So good is my justice that last year there were no less than 16 killed themselves rather than pass through my hands.' H. Williams, in *The Superstitions of Witchcraft*, writes that in Spain, Torquemada personally sent 10,220 persons to the stake and 97,371 to prison."<sup>16</sup>

## The Continuing Carnage of Calvin

The previous section gives a history — up to the waning of the first wave of inquisitions — of the terrors introduced into the world by the inheritors of the dualistic view of mankind that taught that the physical was opposed to the spiritual. Those repressions, imprisonments, and executions did not disappear with the advent of Protestantism. The Protestant reformers were, if anything, even more fanatical, and they persecuted the accused with even greater ferocity.

Martin Luther triggered the Protestant religious schism in 1517, but John Calvin best exemplifies the severe authoritarianism of a movement whose fear of the flesh can still be felt in today's "enlightened" culture.

John Calvin, (Jean Cauvin) was a Frenchman born in the Picardy area, in 1509. His father insisted he attend law school but, after a few years, his desire to become a preacher won out, and he is generally considered the founder of the Presbyterian church.

Calvin claimed to believe that the Bible was an absolute statement of the word of God. In 1536, Calvin published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, one of the most important theological works of all time. *Britannica* states, "From this time forward his influence became supreme." Calvin spent considerable time in Geneva, where he set himself to the task of constructing a government based on the subordination of the state to the Church. Once the Bible is accepted as the sole source of God's law, he argued, the duty of man is to adhere to it and preserve the orderly world which God has ordained.

Calvin not only stressed divine authority, but all paternal authority was unchallengeable. In Geneva a child was beheaded for striking his father; in Scotland, too — a country most strongly affected by Calvin's teachings — severe penalties were prescribed for any child who defied his father. This emphasis on honoring one's parents was not limited to the Europeans. "Some laws in Puritan New England even declared the death penalty for any young who might curse or smite their parents."<sup>17</sup> Such is the result of believing that God actually told Moses: "Every one who curses his father or his mother shall be put to death." [Lev 20:9]

"If there was anything worse than defying a father's authority, it was to defy Calvin's. Special penalties were prescribed for addressing Calvin as Calvin, and not as Mr. Calvin. Citizens who commented unfavorably on his sermons were punished by three days on bread and water."<sup>18</sup>

Since Church and State were one, to hold the wrong opinion was not only heresy but treason. Jacques Gruet, who had criticized Calvin's doctrine and who had written "nonsense" in the margin of one of his books, and Philibert Berthelier, who challenged Calvin's authority to excommunicate, were both

beheaded, along with several of their supporters. Calvin's most formidable opponent within the Protestant movement was Michael Servetus, a well-respected man of medicine and a somewhat liberal theologian. His "sin" was denying the Trinity, claiming (correctly) that the earliest Christians had never heard of such a thing. Calvin betrayed him to the Catholic Inquisition in France, but Servetus escaped the French Inquisitors and went to Geneva hoping to discuss his differences with Calvin. Once there, he was seized, subjected to a sham trial, and burned alive — on Calvin's express instructions.

As with any authoritarian or totalitarian dogma, Calvinism was fanatically opposed to intellectual freedom. Calvin himself stated that he had submitted his mind "bound and fettered" in obedience to God, and he expected a similar subservience from others. This is one of many views he shared with his contemporary, Martin Luther, who stated: "Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has. ... Reason must be deluded, blinded, and destroyed. Faith must trample underfoot all reason, sense, and understanding, ... Know nothing but the word of God."<sup>19</sup> Somehow, the fact that Luther used his reasoning powers to reach this conclusion seems to have escaped his notice.

One aspect of Calvinism which differentiated it from the doctrines of the Middle Ages was a tendency to generalize feelings of guilt to cover every conceivable form of pleasure. Whereas the medieval authorities were inclined to dwell on sex in all its details and deviations, Calvinists devoted their ingenuity to the regulation of all the minutiae of daily life, just as the Puritans in England and America were to do after them.

In Calvin's world, not only were fornication and adultery strictly prohibited, but so were even the mildest forms of spontaneity. Records reveal that bridesmaids were arrested for decorating a bride too gaily. People were punished for dancing, spending time in taverns, eating fish on Good Friday, arranging a marriage between persons of disparate ages, singing songs against Calvin, etc. Items that might bring pleasure to the eye or ear, such as musical instruments, colored clothing, and even stained-glass windows in churches, were pronounced ungodly.

The churches may have been rather drab edifices, but they were surely popular, as attendance on both Sundays and Wednesdays was compulsory. The police went through the streets, shops, and homes to make certain that people weren't shirking their holy duty.

To impose such rigid standards, Calvin oversaw wholesale violence, torture, and executions. Before he was done, 150 of those who disagreed with him were put to death in Geneva.

It had long been the practice of the church to deny the reality of reincarnation — after all, the threat of eternal damnation for disobedience carried no weight if folks had multiple chances to get their lives in order. But Calvin went much further by carrying Augustine's doctrine of predestination to an even more fearful extreme, condemning to eternal torment, not only all babies who died before baptism, but all persons in non-Christian countries, and all those living prior to the time of Christ.

According to his teaching of predestination, some few souls are predestined to go to Heaven, all others are scheduled for a one-way trip to Hell. The greatness of this idea lies in its attractiveness to the rich and powerful. Calvin taught that there was no such thing as free will; that an all-knowing God must know, prior to their birth, which souls were pure and which were tainted. So, how could the denizens of Earth determine who was who? Why, the chosen ones — the "elect" — would naturally be more deserving of God's blessings and thus be more successful in life.

This view was heartily supported by the richest, most successful, and most powerful men. Men who were happy to let the church's endorsement camouflage any guilt they might feel over their favored positions in life. Men who found solace in knowing that their past and future sins were already forgiven. Men with the means and the willingness to generously fill a church's coffers. ... Just the men you want to have on your side if you are seeking to build an autocratic kingdom.



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The Puritans, who based their religious experience on Calvin, “were obsessed with predestination and a terror that they would not be saved. Conversion became a central preoccupation, a violent, tortured drama in which the ‘sinner’ and his spiritual director wrestled for his soul. ... The heavy emphasis on hell and damnation combined with an excessive self-scrutiny led many into clinical depression: suicide seems to have been prevalent.”<sup>20</sup> Such a harsh and unpopular attitude toward life so irritated the rest of Europe that the Puritans were pressured to flee to the New World.

All this was necessary, according to Calvin because: “We are all made of mud. ... We are full of it, we are nothing but mud and filth both inside and outside.”<sup>21</sup> This seems to say that all people are the same; in contradiction to the idea of predestination. Also, Calvin failed to explain why the Almighty would bother to create all these dirty people. But then, reason and facts were of no concern to a man who had given his mind over to the “inerrant” Bible.

Calvin also emphasized Paul and Peter’s view of women as second-class citizens — or less. “Unquestionably, wherever even natural propriety has been maintained, women have in all ages been excluded from the public management of affairs. It is the dictate of common sense, that female government is improper and unseemly.” And, “[T]he woman was created afterwards, in order that she might be a kind of appendage to the man; and ... that she should be at hand to render obedience to him.”

A sentiment echoed by Martin Luther. “The word and works of God is quite clear, that women were made either to be wives or prostitutes.”<sup>22</sup> And, “No gown worse becomes a woman than the desire to be wise.”<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the concepts lowest expression comes the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Christian author, Tertullian: “Woman is a temple built over a sewer.”<sup>24</sup>

Calvin’s dark shadow lingered for centuries over Europe and New England; its remnants still discernable in the U.S. today. In fact, there are several fundamentalist-Christian websites which applaud this perverted murderer as one of the greatest religious leaders of all time.

Let our esteemed third president, Thomas Jefferson, have the last word on Calvin: “The atmosphere of our country is unquestionably charged with a threatening cloud of fanaticism ... this must be owing to the growth of Presbyterianism. The blasphemy and absurdity of the five points of Calvin and the impossibility of defending them, render their advocates impatient of reasoning, irritable, and prone to denunciation ... Their ambition and tyranny would tolerate no rival if they had power.” — letter to Thomas Cooper, 1822.<sup>25</sup>

All this because Paul had a vision of impending cataclysm and recommended that his followers forego the physical and concentrate on the spiritual until the day of reckoning arrived. Perhaps his fearful visions portended the cruel repressions, persecutions, and massacres that his new religion was to inflict upon our weary globe. A religion, by the way, whose anti-pleasure campaign was and is completely foreign to the teachings of either Jesus or the Jews.

## Devilish Instigations

In 1970, comedian Flip Wilson popularized the character Geraldine Jones whose catch phrase “The Devil made me do it!” is often repeated to this day. That phrase is usually tossed off in a joking manner, but the idea of satanic influence in human affairs is no laughing matter. As the ultimate boogeyman, the

image of a King of Hell is employed to terrify the ignorant and the weak-minded into submitting to the will of tyrants and Bible salesmen throughout Western culture.

Since the dawn of civilization in Sumer, most religions/myths portray the evil doer as a rebel or disobedient character (angel or man) who violates some divine directive, thus assuming a combative relationship with the higher powers. Surprisingly, an exception to the bad boy as adversary is the religious book most associated with tales of horror and mayhem — the so-called “Old Testament.”

Ask the typical churchgoer: “When does the Devil first appear in the Bible?” and their most likely response will be some part of the *Genesis* story of the Garden of Eden. They will usually be surprised to learn (assuming that they are open to learning) that the Devil, as we have come to know him, is not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament.

The book of Genesis speaks only of a serpent, a symbol of wisdom throughout many cultures. (Check out the Caduceus and the Staff of Asclepius.) His role in the story is more of a quality-control officer, sent by God to evaluate the reliability of the new creations. The serpent is subtle, but honest; telling only the truth about what will happen when Adam and Eve eat of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The Satan so prominent in the book of *Job* is more of a prosecuting attorney charged with testing God's creations; in Hebrew “satan” meant “adversary.” He is given no power to wreak havoc on his own. Satan is mentioned, without description or comment, only two other times [1Chron 21:1 and Zech 3:1-2]. The term “demons” likewise only appears twice [Deut 32:17 and Ps 106:37] and each time seems to be simply another term for false gods that fickle Hebrews were punished for worshipping.

### **A Contrived Adversary**

As time passed, and as the Jews were exposed to other religions (especially in Babylon) the tempter was seen less as an employee and more as an opponent of God. Among the Essenes and the followers of Jesus, the figure variously called Satan, Beelzebub, or Belial became of central importance. The authors of *Mark* introduce the devil into the crucial opening scene of that gospel, and go on to characterize Jesus' ministry as involving “continual struggle between God's spirit and the demons, who belong, apparently, to Satan's `kingdom' [Mark 3:23-27].”<sup>26</sup>

At the least, this was a significant deviation from mainstream Jewish tradition. To many Jews, this was blasphemy, as it implied that there was more than one god or that their god was not omnipotent.

### **A Growing Monstrosity**

Over the ensuing millennia, Satan became a very definite and prominent figure in Christian dogma, with well-defined habits and intentions. The view developed that he was God's — that is, Christianity's — immortal enemy. As such, he was immensely useful to all who could profit from claiming to fight against him. Vast fortunes have been collected by devious organizations from the trembling masses who hoped their contributions would keep the devil at bay.

Satan's mission began to be seen as trying to mislead folks into denying or perverting Christian morals and practices. And he did far more than attempt to persuade: “The Devil frequently engaged in those sexual acts that were forbidden to men and women and, in some accounts, he is described as having a forked penis, so that he could commit fornication and sodomy at the same time.”<sup>27</sup>

A corollary to this change in the Devil's role — from aide to opposition — was a change in view of the sinner from one who could not resist temptation to one who chose to be in league with Satan, *i.e.*, actually was in opposition to God. As this idea developed further, people began to view their enemies as part of Satan's army. This often escalated into grand conspiracy theories in which anyone who disagreed with the prevailing view was considered a dangerous enemy manipulated by the Devil. Killing heretics (that is, those who disagreed with you) was therefore not only justified, it was seen as a service to God.

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This view is very much extant in today's milieu. "The idea of a tangible satanic force that must be battled out in the world is familiar to tens of millions of fundamentalist and evangelical Christians. At various times, the group said to embody this Evil has been identified as pagans, Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Mormons, and communists. These days they're homosexuals, liberals, and pornographers."<sup>28</sup> And let's not forget abortionists and advocates of birth control.

As the French journalist/philosopher Albert Camus said: "The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance."<sup>29</sup> We have no need of a devil.

## God the Father?

*Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [Mt 1:18]*

Both Matthew and Luke borrowed from other traditions known throughout the world. The divine insemination of Mary is a prime example of this. Being fathered by a god used to be an almost universal qualification for saviors and other great men. Prior to Jesus, those said to be so favored included Krishna, Plato, Alexander the Great, Caesar Augustus, and Genghis Khan.<sup>30</sup>

Often, but not always, the mother was said to be a virgin at the time of conception, but no other tradition made much of a fuss about it. In Jesus' case, the idea of Mary's virginity seems to have resulted from the fact that the author of *Matthew* could read Greek but not Hebrew. In an attempt to show that Jesus' birth was the fulfillment of prophecy, Matthew cites a passage from the book of Isaiah. The Greek version of the scripture that he referenced, however, inaccurately read "Behold a virgin shall conceive ..." The original Hebrew text actually reads "Behold a young woman shall conceive ..." (And Isaiah was not talking about Jesus.) According to Bishop Spong, "The understanding of 'virgin' is present only in the Greek word *parthenos*, used to translate the Hebrew word '*almah* in a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Hebrew word for virgin is *betulah*. '*Almah* never means 'virgin' in Hebrew."<sup>31</sup>

This mistake in translation was recognized long ago, but don't expect the Catholic church to start building shrines to "the young woman Mary" anytime soon. They, and myriad other institutions that likewise profit from repression, will continue to castigate and stigmatize all who follow their natural desire for physical intimacy.

There is money to be made in promoting virginity. A major method in the U.S. is the creation of abstinence programs, a "completely legal way that the federal and state governments funnel hundreds of millions of dollars to religious groups that support them politically."<sup>32</sup> Other than their basis in faulty scholarship, there are two problems with these programs: (1) They violate the idea of separation between religion and government. (2) they don't work. As Dr. Klein has pointed out: "Kids don't abstain — whether they think sex is dangerous or not; whether they make public pledges or not; whether they think God will be mad at them or not. Over 90 percent of Americans have sex before marriage. The only question is whether they will have it in a physically and emotionally healthy environment."<sup>33</sup>

## Salvation

*Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, ... that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still*

*alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.* [1Cor 15-8]

The New Testament contains 13 letters attributed to Paul, seven of which are considered authentic. Of the latter, the earliest,<sup>34</sup> First Thessalonians, contains the first biblical statement of Jesus' resurrection: "we believe that Jesus died and rose again." [1Thess 4:14] The second mention, quoted above, contains the earliest delineation of the three principles on which the Christian religion is built: (1) That Jesus appeared to living people after he had died. (2) That these events were predicted by ancient scripture. (3) That those who believe in his resurrection are saved.

## **OT References**

The so-called predictions and foreshadowing of Jesus' life and death usually cited as being in the Old Testament are simply non-existent. If one has a strong enough need and a vivid enough imagination one can manage to find biblical quotes to support just about any idea. All the easier because the New Testament authors had decades to adapt their tales to "fulfill" familiar scriptures.<sup>35</sup>

Some apologists bring up Jonah being revived — after spending "three days and three nights" in the fish's belly — as some sort of presaging of Jesus' resurrection. Trouble is, Jesus supposedly died on Good Friday and arose from the tomb early on Sunday morning — a span of less than two full days. Apparently, arithmetic is no more important to the "inerrant-Bible" crowd than reason was to Calvin and Luther.

The most cited OT "prediction" of Jesus' miraculous conception is Isaiah's pronouncement to king Ahaz that a woman (almah) will shortly give birth to a child whose name will be Immanuel (God is with us), and that the threat from king Ahaz's enemies will be ended before the child grows up. [Is 7:13+] Matthew references these verses to support his claim of the holy paternity of Jesus. As pointed out in the preceding section, however, in the original Hebrew, the word *almah* means a young woman of childbearing age, but the Greek translation rendered *almah* as *parthenos*, the Greek word for "virgin."

Accurate translations have often proved to be anathema to religious fundamentalists.

## **Manifestations**

Over the past century, there have been several well attested accounts of spirits of deceased people appearing to an assembly of the living. Such manifestations can be seen, heard, and even felt. On at least one occasion a pulse was felt by a doctor prior to the seemingly solid "apparition" fading away.<sup>36</sup> Although these events are rare, they prove that resurrections in spirit are possible, so it would be unjust to deny Paul's claim that:

*So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ... It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.* [1Cor 42-44]

After all, something motivated the first apostles to start spreading the "Good News."

## **Jesus Saves?**

What did Paul mean by: "... the good news ... through which also you are being saved"? Clearly, he did not mean to imply that all one has to do is believe in Jesus and every sin will be forgiven. If he had, he would not have spent so much time encouraging his followers to adhere to his strict rules of behavior. Perhaps Paul was saying that the "good news" that Jesus' spirit had survived the demise of his physical body demonstrated the possibility of everyone's spirit likewise achieving immortality. This is strongly suggested in his comment: "If the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised." [1Cor 15-16]

As the decades and centuries passed, the church fathers found it useful to make Jesus more and more an idol to be worshipped and less and less a teacher to be followed. Wise sayings were undermined by mindless incantations. Consider the dilemma that wealthy TV evangelists would face today if Jesus'

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advice to only pray in private and to shun material riches had not been replaced by the simplistic "Jesus Saves."

The plausible assertion that Jesus' resurrection was proof of an afterlife became the blasphemous claim that belief *in* Jesus is the *only* door thereto.

# Church and State

The very first law, stated in the very first amendment to the U.S. Constitution is: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

The main group behind this prohibition being primary among the Bill of Rights was not the Deists, atheists, secularists, or even Satan worshippers; it was the major churches of the time. Each feared that they would be persecuted if the government should adopt some other group as the country's official church. James Madison, America's fourth president, was a champion of this view: "Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects?"<sup>37</sup>

If the term "establish" is strictly taken to mean "create" or "institute," then Congress has, indeed, managed to avoid founding a new religion or officially endorsing an existing one. But the amendment doesn't say "establishment of a religion"; it clearly means religious practices in general. If "respecting the establishment of religion" includes maintaining, supporting, or promoting the very concept of religion, then the law may well be the most commonly violated of all the laws of the land ... other than highway speed limits.

Demanding that witnesses repeat "So help me, God." in court and the practice of swearing oaths with a hand on a Bible have been around for centuries. More recent intrusions of religion in civic life include: funding chaplains in the military (1791), *In God We Trust* on coins (1864), using public funds for transporting parochial-school students (1947), National Prayer Breakfasts (1953), and "one nation *under God*" (1954). All of which are cited these days as precedent for declaring America to be a "Christian Nation."<sup>38</sup>

The citizens of the United States have always espoused many different faiths, or none at all. Mostly, they all remain hopeful of converting everyone else to their views. In recognition of the unrelenting assaults on individual freedom, many religious organizations<sup>39</sup> today are working to shore up Thomas Jefferson's "wall of separation between church and state."

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# Towards Freedom

*Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind. — Thomas Paine, American Patriot, *The Age of Reason*, 1794.*

## The Naked Book

The Holy Bible is not a single book. It is a compilation of many books, written long ago by many separate authors, over many years. “The men who chronicled and canonized the Bible were subject to human error and limitation.”<sup>40</sup> Not only that, but the texts on which the current version of the Bible is based have been translated and copied over and over as the centuries have passed, thus introducing both accidental and intentional alterations by the scribes. The result is that “there are now more known differences among [existing] manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.”<sup>41</sup>

Those are the basic facts. No knowledgeable person doubts them.

The Bible is, as U.S. President Thomas Jefferson said, “a pile of shit.” Okay, so he used the slightly more dignified descriptor, “dung heap,” but the meaning is the same.

If you are well-versed in the history of the founders of the USA, you might be thinking that the author of the Declaration of Independence also claimed that there were passages of great value within the Bible. And, indeed, there are “diamonds” among the excrement that makes up most of it. But the good parts fail to redeem the bad.

Throughout history there have been times when those who would ban books and those who would burn books have been in ascendance. (The 2020s are one of those times.) Most of the literary victims of their fanaticism were prosecuted on the basis of a small portion of their text; sometimes only one or two sentences ... or even a single word. The Bible can hardly be saved because a few nice thoughts and high-sounding phrases have been sprinkled among its numerous gruesome scenes and despicable ideas.

Within this so-called “Holy” book, mass slaughter is applauded, sexual perversion lauded, slavery endorsed, and betrayal admired. The newer parts are not as violent as the older, but neither do the apostles ever register any complaints about their predecessors. Altogether, the Bible’s impact on civilization has, indeed, been “to corrupt and brutalize.”

Biblical Values are the values of ignorant, violent, credulous, and prejudiced men. The less our children are exposed to them, the better our chances for a safe and joy-filled future.

And yet, year after year, more Bibles are sold than any other book. What does that say about the general populace? Reminds me of all those villagers agreeing that the naked emperor is sporting a fine new suit.

## This Book Uncovered

This book was written to give freedom-loving people both some means to resist religious tyranny and the rationale for doing so, without encouraging them to disavow their immortal souls. No other book has attempted this trifecta. Yes, there are several groups of people and more than a few books dedicated to the overthrow of religious tyranny, but their leaders and authors generally take the stance of atheists or agnostics — “Free-Thinkers” whose supposedly rational minds are actually closed to the overwhelming evidence for an afterlife.

It is a proven fact that we humans are spirits that do survive the demise of our material bodies. The evidence is well-presented in such books as *The Hereafter Trilogy* and *A Lawyer Presents the Evidence for the Afterlife*, among others. Also, most — if not all — people are somewhat aware of our built-in capacity to feel awe and reverence, giving us a sense of higher (godly) powers within a conscious universe.

And so, *Dark Legacies* is absolutely not anti-God; neither is it anti-church, in so far as churches are communities of loving, charitable people working toward a kinder, more tolerant world. Trouble is, the Bible was neither written nor assembled by such kind folks. The Bible is a tool of tyranny, designed and used by would-be autocrats to subjugate, control, and impoverish men and women — especially women.

It is past time to free ourselves from its sinister influence and see those who use the Bible in promotion of Christian Nationalism and other evangelical cults as the power worshippers they actually are.





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## Expand Your Knowledge

To fully comprehend today's threats to freedom and democracy you need to hear what the authors of the following books have to say.

***The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism*** – Katherine Stewart (2020). For too long the Religious Right has masqueraded as a social movement preoccupied with a number of cultural issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage. Stewart presents chilling evidence that millions of American churchgoers are being inflamed and exploited by a cynical, well-funded alliance of power seekers.

***One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*** – Kevin M. Kruse (2015). The belief that America is fundamentally and formally Christian originated in the 1930s. To resist the “socialism” of FDR's New Deal, business leaders enlisted religious activists in a campaign for “freedom under God.” In fine detail, this book explains how an unholy alliance of money, religion, and politics created a false origin story that continues to define and divide American politics to this day.

***The Bible Tells Me So: Uses and Abuses of Holy Scripture*** – Hill and Cheadle (1995). A study of the Bible's often contradictory role in human morality demonstrates how the Bible has been used throughout history as a tool to justify harmful control, superiority, discrimination, and murder.

***The Dark Side of Christian History*** – Helen Ellerbe (1995). Over the past 2 millennia, the Christian church has oppressed, brutalized, and killed millions of individuals in their rather successful efforts to control and repress spirituality. This book reveals, in painstaking detail, the tragedies, sorrows, and injustices inflicted upon humanity by men of the cloth. Ellerbe's expose is a compelling and passionate cry for human dignity and spiritual freedom.

***God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*** – Christopher Hitchens (2007). The title of this book must have been added by some dunce in the marketing department — being human, the author is clearly unqualified to judge what God is or isn't. But the subtitle is absolutely accurate. Hitchens was an atheist who had no understanding of spirituality, yet his book is highly recommended because it thoroughly and clearly reveals the true and fearsome nature of organized religions.

***9 Lies that Control Our Lives*** – Miles Edward Allen (2020). The lies described in this book have corrupted civilization, stifled creativity, encouraged fear, and ruined lives since the beginning of recorded time. Political and religious organizations have long employed these lies to subjugate, repress, and impoverish humankind. [Some passages from “9 Lies” have been included in this book.]

***The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*** – Rodney Stark (1997). Combining his expertise in social science with historical evidence, and his insight into contemporary religion's appeal, Stark finds that early Christianity attracted the privileged rather than the poor, that most early converts were women or marginalized Jews; and ultimately that Christianity was a success because it provided those who joined it with a more appealing, more assuring, happier, and perhaps longer life.

***The Hereafter Trilogy*** – Miles Edward Allen (2015). For those who have doubts about the reality of an afterlife.

## End Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Asimov, Isaac, *Asimov's Guide to the Bible*, Avenel Books, 1981, p. 38.
- <sup>2</sup> Another counter to the movie version; no one would lend gold and jewels to a bunch of downtrodden slaves.
- <sup>3</sup> Paine, Thomas, *The Age of Reason*, 1794.
- <sup>4</sup> Lehrman, Nathaniel S., *Journal of Religion and Health*, October 1963, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 72.
- <sup>5</sup> Taylor, G. Rattray, *Sex in History*, Vanguard Press, 1954.
- <sup>6</sup> In order to attain the magical number 10, "various Christian bodies have divided them quite differently. Some divided the first commandment about God into (1) You shall have no other Gods and (2) You shall make no graven images. They are identical in meaning. Others divided the last commandment into (1) You shall not covet your neighbor's house and (2) You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. They are obviously two aspects of the same injunction. The number ten, however, served the didactic purpose of teaching." —John Shelby Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, 1991, p. 252.
- <sup>7</sup> Voltaire (François Marie Arouet), *Collection des Lettres sur les Miracles*, 1765. "Atrocities" is a somewhat inaccurate translation of the French term "injuste."
- <sup>8</sup> Cole, William Graham, *Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis*, 1955.
- <sup>9</sup> Reis, Ira L., *Premarital Sexual Standards in America*, 1960.
- <sup>10</sup> Twain, Mark (Samuel Clemens), *Letters from the Earth*, ca. 1909.
- <sup>11</sup> See 9 *Lies that Control Our Lives*, Lie number 1, "The Physical Is Inferior to the Spiritual."
- <sup>12</sup> Hefner, Hugh M., *The Playboy Philosophy*, Part III, Installment 14, 1963, p.3.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> Taylor, *op.cit.*
- <sup>15</sup> Hefner, *The Playboy Philosophy*, Part I, Installment 9, 1963, p. 7.
- <sup>16</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, p. 8.
- <sup>17</sup> Gaer, Joseph and Ben Siegal, *The Puritan Heritage: America's Roots in the Bible*, 1964, p. 74.
- <sup>18</sup> Hefner, Hugh, *The Playboy Philosophy*, Installment 10, 1963, p. 4.
- <sup>19</sup> Morgan, Don, website: <http://www.2think.org/hii/mlquotes.shtml>
- <sup>20</sup> Armstrong, Karen, *A History of God*, 1993, pp. 283-284.
- <sup>21</sup> Delumeau, Jean, *Sin and Fear*, 1990, p. 27.
- <sup>22</sup> *Weimar* 12, p. 94.
- <sup>23</sup> *Table Talk* #1555.
- <sup>24</sup> *De Cultu Feminarum* (c160-225)
- <sup>25</sup> Quoted in *Jefferson: Magnificent Populist*, by Martin A. Larson, 1984.
- <sup>26</sup> Pagels, Elaine, *The Origins of Satan*, 1995, p. xvii.
- <sup>27</sup> Hefner, Hugh, "The Playboy Philosophy, part 1," *Playboy*, December 1962, p.63.
- <sup>28</sup> Klein, Marty, *America's War on Sex*, 2012, p. 28.
- <sup>29</sup> *The Plague*, 1947.
- <sup>30</sup> Also: Zoroaster, Apollonius, Alcides, Osiris, Hercules, Mars, Vulcan, Pythagoras, and others.
- <sup>31</sup> Spong, John Shelby, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, 1991, p. 16.
- <sup>32</sup> Klein, *op cit.* p. 15.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.
- <sup>34</sup> The order is based on current biblical scholarship, not the order presented in most New Testament editions.
- <sup>35</sup> Some scholars now think that the story of Jesus was originally written to be read in synagogue as a parallel to the readings about Moses.
- <sup>36</sup> Harrison, Tom, *Life After Death: Living Proof*, 2008, p. 122.
- <sup>37</sup> Madison, James, *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments*, 1785.
- <sup>38</sup> For the full story, see the book *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* by Kevin M. Kruse, 2015.
- <sup>39</sup> See especially Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.
- <sup>40</sup> Fifield, Jr., James W., quoted in *The Christian Fright Peddlers*, by Brooks Walker (1964) p. 137.

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<sup>41</sup> Meyers, Robin R., *Saving Jesus from the Church: How to Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus*, p. 62.