

Spotlight on Christianity

John G Jackson

Christianity Before Christ

Everyone knows that Easter is a roving date in the calendar, since it is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox (the beginning of Spring). Easter, therefore, cannot be the date of the death of any historical personage. Two dates are given in the New Testament for the time of crucifixion, namely: the 14th and the 15th of the month of Nisan.

Gnostic wisdom was not wholly lost to the world, but its great, universal educational system was supplanted. It is a well-established historical fact, not denied by the church, that it required about 500 years to accomplish this submersion of Gnosticism, and to degrade the new generations in ignorance equal to the state of imbecility. History again points its accusing finger at the living evidence. The horrible results of such a crime against nature and mankind are pictured in the Dark Ages. Not even priests or prelates were permitted to learn to read or write. Even bishops could barely spell out their Latin. During this period of mental darkness, the ignorant masses were trained in intolerance, bigotry, fanaticism, and superstitious fear of an invisible power secretly controlled by the church; all of which begat a state of hysteria and imbecility.

Austin Miles

For those who are not familiar with this story from the Bible, it started with the very first couple to walk the earth. God created Adam and Eve in his own image, declared that what he had made was very good, then got so enraged with them that he cursed the entire human race with an uncontrollable fury

that continues to this very day. Unable to resolve the dilemma of homo sapiens using the free will that he had given them, God in exasperation came down to earth and had himself nailed to a cross to appease his own wrath. Even this drastic action had little effect.

The Catholic church in particular, steeped in the theology of sinful babies, convinces the devout that any child not baptized will be plunged into hell with the rest of the damned, even if the child dies at birth. The fate of eternal wrath and guilt is apparently reserved for those who are not necessarily evil-doers, such as the little babies. The transgressors, on the other hand, are blessed, and receive special favors and status from God. So, the actual sinner can go right on sinning, no matter whom he offends, and still be, in God's eye, a law-abiding citizen. He is freed from guilt, and God bestows his mercy and grace upon him, that is, as long as he is a "believer" and under control of the church.

Shmuel Goldin

During the first three-and-a-half centuries of the common era, the most powerful rival of Christianity was the religion known as Mithraism. It had been introduced to Rome by Cilician seamen about 70 BCE, and later spread throughout the Roman world. Prior to the triumph of Christianity, it was the most powerful pagan faith in the Empire. It was suppressed by the Christians in 376-377 CE, but its actual collapse seems to have been due rather to the fact that by that time, many of the doctrines and ceremonies of Mithraism had been adopted by the church. Without the need of any mental somersaults, Jesus Christ had supplanted Mithra in man's worship. This fusion of one God with another is called theocrasia, and nowhere did it go on more vigorously than in the Roman Empire.

Tarsus, the chief city of the Cilicians, and the home of Paul, was one of the chief centers of Mithra worship. What becomes amply clear to anyone who reads Paul's various epistles side by side with the Gospels, is that Paul's mind was saturated by an idea which does not appear prominent in the reported sayings and teachings of Jesus: the figure of a sacrificial person who is offered as an atonement for sin. What Jesus had preached was a new birth of the human soul. What Paul preached was the ancient religion of priest, altar, and bloodshed. Jesus to Paul was the Easter lamb, the traditional human victim without spot or blemish who haunts all the pagan religions.

Mithra was sometimes termed the god out of the rock, and services were conducted in caves. Jesus' origin in a cave is a clear instance of the taking over of a Mithraic idea. Paul says, "They drank from that spiritual rock and that rock was Christ". (1 Cor 10:4) These are identical words to those found in the Mithraic scriptures, except that the name Mithra is used instead of Christ. The Vatican hill in Rome that is regarded as sacred to Peter, the Christian rock, was already sacred to Mithra. Many Mithraic remains have been found there. The merging of the worship of Attis into that of Mithra, then later into that of Jesus, was effected almost without interruption.

Aided by research into the texts of the New Testament and quoting from modern scholars, the fact emerges that the beliefs set forth by Paul were altogether different from those expounded by Jesus and his disciples. What is more, we see from the New Testament itself that Paul was not accepted by the other believers and that his message was rejected by the early church.

Paul claimed to have come to Jerusalem, and to have learned his Judaism there "at the feet of rabbi Gamaliel". (Acts 22:3) He stated that at one point in his life he was a strict Pharisaic Jew. (Acts 26:5) He also claimed to be an apostle, to have been instructed by the risen Christ, to have seen Christ, and to have received his authority from him. (2 Cor 12:1ff) Yet, for all Paul's claims, they were doubted and disputed by the original apostles and Jewish believers. They did not accept him as a true believer, but considered him preaching falsehood.

Paul, if he knew anything of the life and teaching of Jesus as described in the Gospels, chose to ignore it. Instead he presented to the Gentile world a mystery religion in which he transformed Jesus into a divine spirit who existed before the world began and who had gone away to prepare the kingdom of God, not on this earth but in the world of the hereafter.

Robert Green Ingersoll

The Foundations of Faith

Christ, according to the faith, is the second person in the Trinity, the Father being the first and the Holy Ghost the third. Each of these three persons is God. Christ is his own father and his own son. The Holy Ghost is neither father nor son, but both. The son was begotten by the father, but existed before he was begotten -- just the same before as after. Christ is just as old as his father, and the father is just as young as his son. The Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and Son, but was equal to the Father and Son before he proceeded, that is to say, before he existed, but he is of the same age of the other two.

So, it is declared that the Father is God, and the Son God and the Holy Ghost God, and that these three Gods make one God. According to the celestial multiplication table, one is three, and three times one is one, and according to heavenly subtraction if we take two from three, three are left. The addition is equally peculiar, if we add two to one we have but one. Each one is equal to himself and the other two.

Nothing ever was, nothing ever can be more perfectly idiotic and absurd than the dogma of the Trinity.

Is it possible for a human being, who has been born but once, to comprehend, or to imagine the existence of three beings, each of whom is equal to the three?

Think of one of these beings as the father of one, and think of that one as half human and all God, and think of the third as having proceeded from the other two, and then think of all three as one. Think

that after the father begot the son, the father was still alone, and after the Holy Ghost proceeded from the father and the son, the father was still alone -- because there never was and never will be but one God.

At this point, absurdity having reached its limit, nothing more can be said.

If we wish to find what the Bible thinks of woman, all that is necessary to do is read it. We will find everywhere she is spoken of simply as property -- as belonging absolutely to the man. We will find that whenever a man got tired of his wife all he had to do was give her a writing of divorce, and then the mother of his children became a houseless and homeless wanderer. We will find that men were allowed to have as many wives as they could get, either by courtship, purchase, or conquest.

The man who invented the telescope found out more about heaven than the closed eyes of prayer ever discovered.

Theology is not what we know about God, but what we do not know about Nature.

If a man would follow today the teachings of the Old Testament, he would be a criminal. If he would strictly follow the teachings of the New, he would be insane.

Thomas Jefferson

The enormous damage that has been done to our fragile planet and the human species by religious ignorance and superstitions is just beyond the comprehension of any sensitive mind. Dogmatic and doctrinal religions have been historically, and are today, intolerably alien to human intelligence. We are surrounded by savagery, by zealots, and fanatics acting in "the name of God".

Question with boldness even the existence of God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error.

G A Wells

Did Jesus Exist?

The Historical Evidence for Jesus

The earliest unambiguous Christian reference to persecution under Nero is a statement made by Melito, bishop of Sardis, about 170 CE. It would be surprising if a “great multitude” of Christians lived at Rome as early as 64 CE. The evidence for persecution under Domitian is also admitted to be very slight indeed.

These punishments of Christians lacked the public finality of the death sentence. Until 180, no governor in Africa was known to have put a Christian to death. In the late 240s, Origen insisted with rare candor that “few” Christians had died for the faith. They were “easily numbered”, he said.

Nearly all New Testament authors twist and torture the most unhelpful Old Testament passages into prophecies concerning Christianity. Who, ignorant of Matthew 2:16-18, could suppose that Jeremiah 31:15 referred to Herod's slaughter of the innocents.

[Jeremiah 31:16-17 shows that the context has no connection with Matthew 2:16-18, and that in Jeremiah, Rachel's children do, in fact, return.]

About 1200, Constantinople was so crammed with relics that one may speak of a veritable industry with its own factories.

Tim C Leedom

Editor, *The Book Your Church Doesn't Want You to Read*

The oldest story in the world is the virgin mother and the newborn baby.

Fathers of the Christian church strongly opposed the worship of Mary because they were well aware that she was only a composite of Mariaune, the Semitic God-Mother and Queen of Heaven; Aphrodite-Mari, the Syrian version of Ishtar; Juno the Blessed Virgin; the Moerae or trinity of Fates, and many other versions of the Great Goddess.

Even Diana Lucifer, the Morning Star Goddess, was assimilated into the Christian myth as Mary's mother, Anna or Dina. Churchmen knew the same titles were applied to Mary as to her pagan forerunners: queen of heaven, empress of hell, and lady of the world.

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It is evident that when Queen Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, fixed the site of the Church of the Nativity in the year 326 CE, it was not on the basis of history or Biblical proof.

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If Jesus had been executed, mythically or historically, it would not have been with outstretched arms on a cruciform structure. Scholars have been aware of the error but have been unable to resist the traditional mistranslation. In the 18th century some Anglican bishops recommended eliminating the cross symbol altogether, but they were ignored.

There is no cross in early Christian art before the middle of the 5th century, where it (probably) appears on a coin in a painting. The first clear crucifix appears in the late 7th century. Before then Jesus was almost always depicted as a fish or a shepherd, never on a cross.

Constantine's supposed 4th-century vision of a cross in the sky was not of the instrument of execution; it was the Greek letter "X" (chi) with a "P" (rho) through it, the well-known "monogram" of Christ, from the first three letters of "Christos".

Any bible that contains the word "cross" or "crucify" is dishonest. Christians who flaunt the cross are unwittingly advertising a pagan religion.

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Native Americans were perceived as "heathens" -- within one century after the "discovery" of America, 50 million non-Christian natives were killed by . . . Christian soldiers, explorers, and missionaries.

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Even though John Wycliffe died peacefully at home in bed on New Years Eve, the Church exhumed his body 44 years later (1428). For the crime of translating the Latin Bible into English, they burned his bones, and scattered the ashes in the nearby River Swift, in an attempt by the medieval church to stamp out his "unsavory" memory.

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The Fish (Ichthus, Piscis) has its origins in stellar and pagan religions, but has been claimed in many Christian circles as an original creation of Christianity. The fish joins a long list that includes the virgin birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the trinity, and the final days -- all adding to the argument that Christianity didn't replace pagan religion, but is the latest in a series of pagan religions.

William R Cooper

(devout Christian)

The very first of the chief epithets applied to Horus in his third great office has a startlingly Christian sound; it is the "Sole begotten Son of the Father", to which, in other texts, is added, "Horus the Holy Child", the "Beloved son of his father". The "Lord of Life", the "Giver of Life" are also both very usual epithets, as are the "Justifier of the Righteous", the "Eternal King", and the "Word of the Father Osiris".

The Horus Myth in Its Relation to Christianity

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The study of Egyptian mythology will throw more light upon the restrictive customs of the Jews, the

allusions of the prophets, and the early history of the Christian church than that of any other country.

The Serpent Myths of Ancient Egypt

The works of art, the ideas, the expressions, and the heresies of the first four centuries of the Christian era cannot be well studied without a right comprehension of the nature and influence of the Horus myth. It becomes every student, or at all events every expositor of the Book of books, to examine this myth, and work out its operations for himself.

Lloyd Graham

Deceptions and Myths of the Bible

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, the book of Luke was not written till nearly two hundred years after this event [Jesus' departure]. The proof offered is that the Theophilus to whom Luke addressed it was bishop of Antioch from 169-177CE.

[Regarding the near-sacrifice by Abraham:] This too is an old story and like so many others in the Bible, originated in India. The Babylonians also had their Abraham, only they spelled it Abarama. He was a farmer and mythological contemporary with Abraham.

The name Moses is Egyptian and comes from "mo", the Egyptian word for water, and "uses", meaning saved from water, in this case primordial.

Such a story as the Gospels is unworthy of man's respect; it is the greatest fraud and hoax ever perpetrated upon mankind.

Martin A Larson

The Story of Christian Origins

Both Gautama [Buddha] and Jesus found parable effective.

Among the basic elements which the Synoptics obtained from Zoroastrianism we may mention the following: the intensely personal and vivid concepts of hell and heaven; the use of water for baptism and spiritual purification; the savior born of a true virgin-mother; the belief in demons who make human beings impure and who must be exorcised; the Messiah of moral justice; the universal judgment, based upon good and evil works; the personal immortality and the single life of every human soul; the apocalyptic vision and prophecy; and the final tribulation before the Parousia.

In addition, Paul, Revelation, and the Fourth Gospel drew heavily upon Zoroastrianism for elements which are absent from the Synopics: eg, the doctrine of absolute metaphysical dualism, the Logos concept, transformation into celestial spirits, the millennial kingdom, Armageddon, the final conflagration, the defeat of Satan, the renovation of the universe, and the celestial city to be lowered from the Supreme Heaven to the earth. All these divine and "revealed" doctrines of the Christian faith we have seen to be originally heathen Zoroastrian mythology, taken over first by the Jews, then boldly plagiarized by the ex-pagan Christians.

We believe that, had there been no Christianity, Greek enlightenment would, after a fierce struggle with Mithraism and its offspring Manichaeism, have emerged victorious. There would have been no Dark Ages.

M M Mangasarian

The Truth About Jesus

The church historian, Mosheim, writes that, "The Christian Fathers deemed it a pious act to employ deception and fraud". Again, he says: "The greatest and most pious teachers were nearly all of them infected with this leprosy". Will not some believer tell us why forgery and fraud were necessary to prove the historicity of Jesus. Another historian, Milman, writes that, "Pious fraud was admitted and avowed by the early missionaries of Jesus". "It was an age of literary frauds", writes Bishop Ellicott, speaking of the times immediately following the alleged crucifixion of Jesus. Dr Giles declares that, "There can be no doubt that great numbers of books were written with no other purpose than to deceive". And it is the opinion of Dr Robertson Smith that, "There was an enormous floating mass of spurious literature created to suit party views".

Is it conceivable that a preacher of Jesus could go throughout the world to convert people to the teachings of Jesus, as Paul did, without ever quoting a single one of his sayings? Had Paul known that Jesus had preached a sermon, or formulated a prayer, or said many inspired things about the here and the hereafter, he could not have helped quoting, now and then, from the words of his master. If Christianity could have been established without a knowledge of the teachings of Jesus, why then, did Jesus come to teach, and why were his teachings preserved by divine inspiration? If Paul knew of a miracle-working Jesus, who could, and did, perform many wonderful works to convince the unbelieving generation of his divinity -- is it conceivable that either intentionally or inadvertently Paul would have never once referred to them in all his preaching?

Arthur Melville

Holds a BA in philosophy, a Master's in Religious Education, and a PhD in Clinical Psychology. He is a former Maryknoll missionary priest, and he worked six years in the mountains of Guatemala.

He is a psychotherapist, with a private practice on Long Beach, California.

He is the author of *With Eyes to See, A Journey from Religion to Spirituality*.

A process addiction that today demands much attention is that of clerical pedophilia -- specifically that of Catholic priests sexually abusing children.

The celibate male hierarchy of the Catholic Church, in which I participated as a missionary priest, has historically needed to cover its dysfunctions with secrets in order to maintain its strict control over large segments of the populace. Principal among the tools employed by the Catholic Church for such control are: the manipulation of beliefs and establishing of the hierarchy as the determinant of appropriate sexual behavior.

From that perspective it follows that the Church would prohibit the questioning of authority and that it would preoccupy itself and its members with what it considers to be, and what it condemns as, sins of sexuality. However, the hierarchy seems to have forgotten that "He who casts the first stone . . ." is always relevant for those who consider themselves the designers of social morality.

Having long disregarded the fact that suppression of healthy sexuality leads to pathology, and having established itself as the standard-bearer of sexual mores by vowing to lives of carnal and reproductive abstinence, the hierarchy is now experiencing a long-overdue backlash. Its own priests are being identified as frequent violators of society's basic morality and as perpetrators of child sexual abuse. The same hierarchy that has long condemned the laity is now confronted with humiliation, embarrassment and shame as a growing number of its members are being caught and exposed, not simply in the common sins of sex on which the church has commonly judged the laity, but in sins of deviant sexuality that are illegal as well as immoral.

I have difficulty feeling compassion for the distraught bishops, who, trained and skilled in the art of control, have lied and conspired to keep the clerical pedophiles and their behavior hidden, and thus have abetted and perpetuated the sexual transgressions against innocent children.

Child molestation by clerics has long been a secret part of the Church's history, with the well-connected and powerful hierarchy able to hide the truth by using tactics of pressure, politics, and deceit. Only when the American judicial system finally became involved were the secret sins of the sanctuary forced into the open. A bishop can no longer save face by simply transferring the sick priest to another parish as a potential predator to a new batch of innocents.

Strengthened by recent revelations, victims and their families are finding the courage and legal support to confront the hierarchy for past and present abuses. The cases seem endless and financially overwhelming. An already questioning laity is angry and confused.

Even with the costly legal damages being awarded to the victims of the priests and growing distrust of a large segment of the laity, the American bishops refuse to take effective action. They remain stymied by the possibility of further loss of trust and subservience on the part of the faithful and the effect on financial contributions. Also knowing that any broadening of the clerical scandal could diminish their traditionally prestigious position among governing structures, the bishops are caught between revealing the whole truth and loss of control. The result is that they only choose to establish remedial steps for dealing with identified violators and their victims, thus hoping to somehow curtail continued fallout.

The bishops lack the integrity and motivation to heal. I sincerely doubt that they possess the necessary strength of character and the indispensable humility needed to deal with the essence of the problem -- to reach into the soul of the structure of the Church and bring forth and confess before the laity the underlying truth -- that the very nature of the institution cultivates and fosters the sexual deviancy of its celibate members.

We will know if and when the Church is sincere in wanting a healing when the bishops choose to go to the source of the problem, acknowledging that the sin lies not simply with the perpetrators, but also with the hierarchy itself, and even more so with the very institution that gives the hierarchy its

position of power. Can we expect any less from the "successors of Jesus" than that they confess their own inadequacies and hypocrisy, and evaluate publicly and reveal fully the humanly developed historical context of the problem found in the institutional traditions, attitudes, beliefs, and teachings?

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These are some aspects of the religious structure through which dysfunction, control, and secrets lead to sexual abuse:

- 1) The rewarding priestly life of prestige and power that prohibits intimate relationships draws like a magnet those who harbor sexual inhibitions, inadequacies, and fears, men not capable of the prohibited relationships who in turn are not expected to recognize their symptoms or deal with their psychological problems. Prolonged isolation, such as all-male seminary, becomes a fruitful breeding ground for unhealthy social behavior that seeks dysfunctional and deviant relationships.
- 2) A priesthood that holds as divine mandate the exclusive participation of men and thus the implicit superiority of men will attract men who feel inferior to women. Such an environment becomes a hotbed for socio-sexually maladapted personalities and their accompanying problems. Adults who feel incapable of relating to their peers are attracted to life in which they are free to and expected to relate to children.
- 3) That only men can be called to the highest service of the Church obviously creates general but subtle arrogance among "the chosen". Presumed supremacy leads to permissiveness in acting out hidden or unacceptable behavior.
- 4) Celibacy is accepted as a necessary means to the goal of the priesthood. But when the thrill of the goal withers and frustration has no acceptable outlet, latent pathology easily unfolds.
- 5) Alcoholism is endemic among the clergy, the bottle frequently being the only legally and ecclesiastically acceptable answer to the pain and loneliness of even the committed celibate. And, as is well known, it lowers social inhibitions.

6) A hierarchy trained to distance itself from the people and distrust its followers with the truth, keeps secret the deviant behavior of its members, encouraging further deviancy.

7) A hierarchy with its focus on eternal salvation tends to overlook common worldly knowledge, such as the fact that abused children become abusing adults. With a longstanding and high incidence of abuse among the clergy, it is unacceptable that clerical applicants have never been examined or evaluated for incest or other forms of childhood abuse.

Catholic nuns are conducting surveys to identify the number of incest survivors among their ranks. Though many predict that the survey results may be shockingly high, these studies are not being done at the request of a secretive hierarchy. Instead, to avoid being controlled, blocked, and possibly punished by the hierarchy, the nuns are keeping their surveys away from the bishops until they are completed.

After having spent nine years in the seminary, six years in the priesthood, and the past fifteen years as a psychotherapist working with addicts, I am familiar with what sexually addicted priests have to go through in their recovery process, and wonder if the bishops will provide the supportive and loving environment, an environment committed to integrity, that is needed for recovery.

That the bishops send the offenders into isolation, therapy, or rehabilitation does not mean healing, nor does it end the bishops' responsibility, or even begin to identify the source of the problem. One of the keys to recovery from any addiction is full disclosure of the behaviors and the making of amends, none of which is possible in an atmosphere which insists on secrecy and the hiding of the problem.

Addictions do not go away. They must be managed every day for the rest of one's life. Controlling or dysfunctional systems that generate and support addictive behavior must be exposed and those addicted must be able to separate from such an environment in a healthy manner. If the secrets or

lies of the system are encouraged or permitted, regression and the continuance of the problem are guaranteed. By its very nature, Catholicism, with its extreme position on sexuality, fosters a dysfunctional environment.

Perhaps the healing must begin with the laity. A healthy laity would do well to distinguish between a religious system and spiritual development, and to commit to personal growth rather than to a religious leadership in denial. And the Catholic bishops must see that the recovery process is important not only to the perpetrators, but to themselves and especially to their disheartened laity.

The same rules and principles of recovery apply to all: rigorous truth and loving support are basic and essential. Nothing less can be expected from those who would follow in the footsteps of Him who said, "Suffer the children to come unto me". Nothing less can be accepted for the children abused by clergymen, already cast in the role of sexual abusers of the future.

If the steps taken by the bishops today regarding clerical pedophilia are only meant to maintain control and contain the existing problem, we are then witnessing a serious step in the weakening and possible demise of one of the West's most ancient and revered institutions.

Annie Laurie Gaylor

Author, lecturer, and editor of *Freethought Today*. She and her mother, Anne Nicol Gaylor, founded the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Madison, Wisconsin.

The general consensus in the United States of the 1990s is that if it is religious, it must be good. Criticism of religion is discouraged and stifled. It remains socially unacceptable to point out the main objections which skeptics and freethinkers have to religion: that it is both untrue and harmful. Ironically, while criticism of religion rarely makes the mainstream, the slandering and scapegoating of atheists is so acceptable that polls have shown that most Americans would not consider voting for an atheist for President.

Christian religious indoctrination has taught believers that what makes you a good person is what you believe, not what you do. "Get right with God" and everything else falls into place, is the fundamentalist view. In this black-and-white world, the good are the Christians who will go to heaven; the bad are the hell-bound unbelievers.

While the more liberal branches of Christianity usually reject this simplistic bifurcation of the world and this narrow understanding of morality, they too believe that being a Christian is what makes one "good". Their benevolent view of Jesus and the parts of the bible they deign to acknowledge as relevant to today's world, does not permit exploration of the darker side of Christianity. History is replete with the recorded abuses and savageries of organized religion when it comes to power. Human sacrifices to appease the gods; the Crusades; the Inquisition; the execution of millions of women under the direction of the bible; pogroms against Jews; the Holocaust; Jonestown, Guyana; etc.

Believers in our society are indoctrinated to ignore the bloody history of religion, and to pay effusive lip service to belief in God, Jesus, the bible, and God's holy representatives on earth. Ordained ministers and priests are "men of God", "God's holy instruments", a race apart, anointed. It is then no wonder that clergymen who wish to misuse power and betray trust are in a unique position to do so. Newspapers are full of reports of financial exploitation, sexual transgressions during pastoral counseling, and what has surfaced since the mid-1980s as one of the most persistent public relations problems facing both Catholic and Protestant churches today: the criminal sexual abuse of children by ordained clergymen.

Professionals agree that pedophiles, sexual abusers of children, often seek out professions or activities which bring them into contact with children. Largely unexplored is the role Christianity may play in possibly molding criminal abusers. Researchers know that a typical child molester is a "good Christian" and often a church-goer active in church activities.

Religious doctrine encourages power toward women and children, and such inequities invariably lead to abuse. Christian doctrine emphasizes submission and teaches the exemplary Christian to follow like sheep, and "become as little children". (Matthew 18:3) The classic Christian concept that human nature is innately "depraved" and sinful may also be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Does the Christian ministry attract sexual deviants, or mold them? It may be an unanswerable riddle. When one looks at fallen televangelist Jimmy Swaggart, one may surmise that the more he ranted against the temptations of pornography and illicit sexual relations, the more he was trying to overcome his own impulses, and fighting his own nature. Or one may speculate that the deep sexual repressions of the fundamentalist religion, coupled with the unhealthy adulation he received as one of God's chosen, corrupted what was once an innocent nature.

In either case, the mixture of ministerial power with religion's social inequities and repressive doctrines is demonstrably explosive.

The social myth persists that a child molester is most apt to be of low-class breed lurking in dark hallways, interested in abduction of children he does not know. In fact, most sexual abusers of children are respectable, otherwise law-abiding people who cultivate friendly relationships with their chosen prey, and may escape detection for precisely those reasons. Research agrees that the typical child molester is able to harm large numbers of children without being caught, in part, because he has already established a trusting relationship, playing on children's sense of loyalty, vulnerability, shame, and naivete, and fortifying his power to silence them through bribery, coercion, and violent threats. In case of a molesting man of the cloth, add to these threats the supernatural ones of God's wrath or hellfire.

One study from March 1990 found that a quarter of all clergy have engaged in sexual misconduct. The largest (8-year) study of pedophiles revealed that molesters often become youth ministers, daycare workers, Boy Scout leaders, teachers, Big Brothers, and pediatricians. He is often an active Christian

who is involved in his church. The study also found that 403 pedophiles had molested more than 67,000 children! Pedophiles who targeted male victims averaged 282 victims, while pedophiles who targeted girls averaged 23 victims. (Other studies have uncovered more traditional findings of higher incidences of abuse of girls.)

Roman Catholic canon attorney Father Thomas Doyle has estimated that about 3000 Roman Catholic priests are pedophilic abusers. That's an average of 16 priestly sex abusers per diocese.

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One study revealed that Catholic priests were acquitted or dismissed of child molestation charges at a higher rate than Protestant ministers. Catholic priests also received a higher rate of suspended sentences when convicted, and when sentenced, spent considerably less time in jail or prison.

In the study, involving 190 ordained clergy and 60 non-ordained clergy staff (such as Sunday school teachers), crimes mainly occurred at church locations. One convicted priest molested victims just before giving Mass. Sexual abuse occurred at the sacristy, in the rectory, or in the church van. About half of the clergymen were officially involved in youth functions. About a third were accused of molesting youths during camping trips, youth group activities, retreats, and crusades. About 20% were accused of molesting children at religious schools, 21% at church homes for children or through foster care. Eleven percent were accused of abusing children only during counseling sessions, although other cases also involved counseling.

Another study confirmed the earlier findings of a Catholic versus Protestant double standard, with priests receiving lighter sentences than Protestant ministers, and non-ordained clerical staff receiving by far the heaviest sentences. Catholic priests accused in 1990 were persecuted mainly for molesting boys, while about half of the Protestant clergy were charged for crimes involving female victims.

Cover-ups were specifically noted in newspaper reports in 38% of the cases. The most blatant cover-up that year involved a Salvation Army minister who was permitted to keep his job and was

given continuing access to children after back-to-back arrests for sexually abusing children during bible classes.

Shockingly, 11 out of the 46 Protestant ministers charged in 1990 with criminal sexual abuse had prior convictions -- nearly a quarter of the cases, all dating since 1985. Most of the men had received light sentences, enabling them to return to the pulpit, and resume sexual abuse of children, quickly. Churches are not only failing to check ministers' records, but in some instances are knowingly hiring convicted child molesters. Defendants often unabashedly used their piety and positions to ask for (and sometimes receive) court leniency.

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The first nationally breaking news story about church cover-ups of sex crimes broke in 1984, when attorney Gloria Allred brought the country's first "clergy malpractice" lawsuit on behalf of Rita Mills, a devout Catholic teenager. One day Father Santiago Tamayo reached through the broken screen in the confessional to fondle her breast. By January 1980, he was engaging in sexual intercourse with her. He introduced her to Father Cruces, who also used her sexually. In all, five other priests encouraged her compliance, flaunting their religious authority over the sheltered teenager. Rita later told news media that the priests had told her sex was natural, and that "priests get lonely, too". She was purportedly aiding them in their religious work.

When she became pregnant in January 1982, she was packed off to the Philippines. She told her family she would be "studying medicine". The priests intended for her to have her baby in secrecy and leave it there, giving her only \$450 to last seven months. She lived with cockroaches and ate only one meal a day, nearly dying during childbirth of eclampsia. Her family rescued her, and Rita and her baby daughter returned to the states, after Bishop Abaya of the Philippines promised to help her.

When that aid failed to materialize, Rita went to Bishop Ward of Los Angeles for help. He said there was nothing he could do. After that final betrayal of trust, Rita and her mother filed the landmark clergy

malpractice suit, seeking to establish paternity, set up child support, and sue the priests and the church for civil conspiracy for breach of fiduciary duty, fraud, deceit, and clergy malpractice -- and "to protect other young women from the pain and suffering caused by priests who abuse their position of trust". The court dismissed case, citing a one-year time limit.

When Allred called the press conference to expose the scandal and announce the suit, all seven priests mysteriously vanished without trace, according to the archdiocese of Los Angeles. In 1991, Tamayo finally resurfaced, documenting to media that the diocese had warned him and his cohorts to flee the country. Tamayo offered proof that the church had known his whereabouts for years, including during the time when Allred tried unsuccessfully to serve him and the other priests with legal papers. The archdiocese had sent him monthly payments for years while he hid out in the Philippines.

In 1988, the church had finally set up a \$20,000 trust fund for Milla's daughter, after she agreed to drop a slander suit against a bishop. The church lawyer maintained it was not an admission of liability, but an act of benevolence for the child.

A nationally renowned case was filed in 1985, focusing public attention on Catholic cover-ups. Father Gilbert Gauthe, of Louisiana, admitted to molesting 37 boys and one girl. He pleaded guilty on various charges in October 1985 and was given a 20-year prison sentence with no possibility of parole. The families of many of his victims went to court when they learned that a bishop and monsignor were aware of child molestation reports against Gauthe for more than ten years before his abuse was halted. Gauthe had molested some of the children as many as 200 times, including anal and oral rape, during church outings, when alone with children, in the rectory, sacristy, confessional, and the priest's camper.

Small-town Catholics turned against the families as trouble-makers. All but one family agreed to settle their civil lawsuits out of court. But Faye and Glenn Gastal had their day in court. After their son, eleven, testified in court, he received a one-million

dollar award for damages from the Catholic Church on February 7, 1986. His parents received \$250,000 as compensation for their pain, ostracism, and harassment.

The Gastal boy testified that he was led to believe that being molested by priests was part of his job as altar boy. He thought his parents knew what was happening: "I thought he was doing the right thing because he was a priest". Later, the priest guaranteed his silence by threatening that "he would hurt my daddy, he'd kill him".

In what is the classic Catholic "musical chairs" mode of dealing with accusations against priests, it was revealed that the church had simply transferred Gauthe to new, unsuspecting communities. Parents had confronted the priest as early as 1972. In 1974, Gauthe admitted to a bishop that he had made "imprudent touches" in "one isolated case". The following year, the bishop appointed him chaplain of the diocesan Boy Scouts. In 1977, more parents complained. Gauthe was directed to seek psychiatric treatment by church officials, but in 1978 he was transferred to another family parish. The sworn statement of one church official was, "I am trained as a priest to forget sins". The enormity of the scandal prompted even the National Catholic Reporter to condemn the cover-up. The church has paid at least \$14 million to the victims of Gauthe alone.

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The willingness of congregants to support an accused clergyman has numerous illustrations. One 1986 criminal case revealed the extent to which fundamentalist backers of a convicted molesting preacher would go. Christian supporters from three states filled the courtroom during hearings against Rev James Britton Myers of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Although he was convicted of the heinous crime of raping a little girl at this Christian school over a five-year period, starting when she was five, one member of his congregation called the crime "one drop of ink in a crystal-clear water".

A judge in California was inundated with letters of support asking him to pardon Father Andrew Christian Andersen, who was found guilty in 1986 of 26 counts of child molestation. Following the

guilty verdict, Andersen was hugged by a church pastor and dozens of supporters. The judge sentenced him only to five years' probation, with the condition that he serve it at a church-owned treatment facility in New Mexico. Although the Diocese of Orange had received a report by a mother that her son had been abused by him, Andersen had been permitted to continue regular contact with altar boys for the following three years.

The church never reported anything. He had been sent for some counseling, but quickly resumed molesting, and was not removed from positions involving the supervision of boys. He was finally reported to authorities by a psychiatrist counseling a 13-year-old altar boy. The postscript of this cover-up is that Andersen's probation was revoked in 1990 and he was sentenced to six years in state prison, following his arrest in New Mexico for forcing a teenage boy into a car, assaulting him and trying to sodomize him.

The extent to which a minister-molester is held above suspicion, despite blatant criminal acts, is exemplified by a 1987 criminal suit in Nashville. The arrest of Rev Jack Law, a Baptist minister, was heralded by a headline, "Girl, 5, Raped Under Pew". He was accused not only of that, but of molesting and raping her two sisters. These crimes took place at the family home as well during an outing arranged by him so the girls could help him distribute religious tracts. The girls had tried to tell their parents, but were not believed. "Being a preacher", the father said of him to local media, "we thought he was a good man". Law killed himself that year rather than face trial.

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Why are churches often a safe harbor for criminal child molesters? It is, in part, because children are taught to give "men of God" special deference and obedience. Children are taught that their body belongs to God. A young child who assumes his or her body is not their own, but is "owned by God" will be vulnerable to abuse by an esteemed "man of God".

Clergy whose role includes "pastoral counseling", are trusted and sought after for confidences and guidance. Clergy are often in contact with depressed or hurting parishioners, who are

expected to confess and confide deeply personal feelings. The Catholic Church's traditional ritualistic confession of "sins" sets up an opportunity for children to be inappropriately questioned by priests on intimate or embarrassing topics.

Churches are used to operating as though they were above the law. They treat these cases as a crisis of faith, rather than as criminal actions. Churches are not policing themselves, and are often unpoliced by the state. Even under fire, churches are dragging their feet to institute reforms.

Since 1986, the Church Mutual Insurance Company has formally advised church clients to fingerprint all applicants for church positions, to carefully check out resumes and gaps in resumes, to call references and demand them for work with children, to institute careful monitoring of church day cares, to make sure two adults act as chaperons of field trips, to take, in short, the kinds of precautions that public schools and better child care facilities have been taking for years. Are the churches doing it? No.

In 1990, Auxiliary Bishop A James Quinn of Cleveland told a conference of canon attorneys to consider hiding the crimes, by sending files on priests accused of child molestation to the Vatican Embassy in the District of Columbia, which he maintains is outside the reach of the US Courts. "If there's something there you really don't want people to see, you might send it off to the Apostolic Delegate", said Quinn.

In addition, church officials are either exempt by law from the mandatory child abuse reporting laws, or prosecutors are interpreting those laws as if they were exempt. Any action taken by churches largely has been in reaction to civil suits against them, when their pocketbooks are threatened, and, to a lesser extend due to unfavorable publicity. The Catholic hierarchy in particular has been outspoken in trying to minimize or defend abusers within its ranks.

With such attitudes, was it surprising that Cardinal John O'Connor of New York City wanted to offer Father Bruce Ritter a job, even after a probe of his Covenant House network for runways found him guilty of sexual and financial misconduct in 1990?

Ritter was never prosecuted for a 20-year pattern of sexual misconduct.

Austin Miles

Minister, author of several books, including *Don't Call Me Brother* and *Setting the Captives Free*

Even though its methods of accumulating wealth and its consequent power are more sophisticated today, Christianity is still plundering with a continuous holy rape upon the pocketbook of every American. Because churches are tax-exempt, the average citizen pays an additional \$925 a year in taxes.

This tax-free ride has granted churches access to unlimited wealth. Growing in power and ownership, they now own 20-25% of all real estate in America. According to IRS, church donations total over \$19 billion a year. This does not include profits from businesses, stock and bond holdings, retirement centers, or lease-back arrangements.

The Mormon Church alone collects at least \$4.3 billion a year from its members and another \$400 million from its many business enterprises purchased with tax-exempt donated money. Churches own \$81 billion worth of tax-exempt real estate in Texas and \$1.3 billion in Los Angeles County. Consider the prime real estate owned by them in New York City, Chicago, Boston, and other large metropolitan areas.

High-living religious leaders pay no taxes on any of that property or on the income that is generated on those properties. If taxes are necessary to run the United States, and churches take a percentage out of those taxes, someone must pick up the slack for them, and that someone is you. At our expense, churches have enjoyed enormous privileged wealth.

Why?

Federal law clearly prohibits state aid to any church organization. But it is also clear that exempting church properties from taxation is a form of aid, since that lost tax revenue must be collected from

all remaining properties. Expert legal opinion is that the tax-exempt status of churches is illegal. So, why do we continue to violate this law? Because it is a well-established tradition, and no one has been willing to take a firm stand on the issue.

From the beginning of this tradition there has been a clear understanding that churches would relieve the state from social and welfare responsibilities by providing for the poor with whatever monies and property it accumulated. Any excess monies would be used for this purpose only, not to be accumulated. The federal government expected (and church leaders understood) churches to devote themselves "exclusively to the public good".

But religious organizations have not held up their end of the bargain. Instead of using excess funds to assist the poor and other "public good", most churches invest the money in for-profit (but not for-tax) ventures. Here are some examples of churches devoting their funds to the public good.

- The Catholic Church (which forbids the use of birth-control) has a large investment in a pharmaceutical firm that manufactures birth control pills.
- A group of Baptist ministers (in February, 1992) repeatedly offered beauty contestant Desiree Washington \$1 million cash if she would withdraw her rape charge against boxer Mike Tyson.
- William Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ offered Universal Studios \$1 million cash for the negative of the film "The Last Temptation of Christ" so he could burn it.
- Pat Robertson (in May, 1992) tried to buy United Press International for \$6 million cash. That money consisted of tax-free donations to his tax-free religious organization. Ownership of the wire service would have given Robertson enormous control over the secular media.
- Rev Pete Peters, pastor of the Church of Christ in Laporte, Colorado, publishes vile hate literature and distributes it (using publicly subsidized postage). He advocates the death penalty for homosexuals and forced exile for American Jews.

That unofficial agreement between the federal government and religious organizations obviously

failed to include a clear definition of "public good". Churches have exploited this loophole to make sure it is their concept of "public good" that prevails. Well-funded right-wing Christians have organized themselves into a voting bloc which is powerful enough to thwart enforcement of tax laws against them and to prevent prosecution for tax violations. Unlimited funds allow their lobbying groups to continue to gain power.

One of the clearly defined (and clearly unenforced) laws applicable to tax-exempt religious organizations prohibits churches from engaging in any political activity. They are also barred from engaging in more than an insignificant amount of lobbying activities. (IRS Manual, sections 501(c)3 and 170(c)2).

From the Overview of Tax Rules Applicable to Exempt Organizations, prepared for the House Committee on Ways and Means: "Prohibited political activity involves the participation or intervention, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. The office involved can be national, state, or local; and it is not required that the election be contested or involve the participation of political parties. The critical issue in determining whether an activity constitutes intervention in a political campaign is whether it reflects or advances a preference between competing candidates."

IRS wants to tax churches, but Congress has tied their hands. According to the late Senator Heinz, "Congress does not want to offend the religious right. They cave in to their demands to gain their votes. The rest of the population they are supposed to serve be damned."

Violations, no matter how blatant, are rarely prosecuted, and church leaders are rarely investigated.

Hutchinson, tried and convicted in 1638 by both the church and the state and sentenced to exile in the wilderness for the crime of holding unauthorized discussions about religion with friends and neighbors in her own home. The other statue is of Mary Dyer, convicted of the crime of merely being a Quaker and executed by hanging on Boston Common in 1660.

Baptists were jailed in Virginia for not having the approval of the state church (Episcopal) to preach. Most of the colonies compelled people to pay taxes for the support of religion and made second-class citizens of members of disfavored religions.

The deleterious effects of church-state unions can be seen around the world today. In some Muslim countries, conversion from Islam to another religion is a capital crime. In some Muslim countries, Islamic religious law is applied to Christians and other non-Muslims. German citizens pay heavy taxes to their churches, while Norwegian and Swedish citizens pay milder taxes to support state churches. British citizens are taxed to support religious private schools, and public schools must offer daily prayer exercises. Germans may be prosecuted for "blasphemy", a religious offense. Examples could be cited endlessly.

Key landmarks in the struggle for church-state separation were James Madison's 1785 Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments and Thomas Jefferson's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, which became law in Virginia in 1785 and subsequently became a model for legislation and constitutional provisions in other states. In a well-thought-out letter to the Danbury, Connecticut, Baptist Association, President Thomas Jefferson declared that the First Amendment erected "a wall of separation between church and state".

The First Amendment and the rest of the Bill of Rights applied at first only to the federal government, as it was generally assumed that state constitutions and governments would protect the liberties of citizens of the states. By the end of the Civil War, it was obvious that the states were not up to functioning as effective guarantors of basic rights. The 14th Amendment was added to the Constitution in 1868 to remedy that deficiency.

Edd Doerr

Author, President of *Americans For Religious Liberty*

On the lawn of the Massachusetts state capitol in Boston stand two statues. One is of Anne

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court did not see fit to apply the Bill of Rights to state and local government, as the 14th Amendment was intended to do, until after World War I, and then only slowly and in a piecemeal way.

The United States invented and pioneered the principle of separation of church and state. That principle was often violated in our history, but it became even more fully implemented as time rolled on and was clearly accepted by most Americans. Beginning during World War II, the Supreme Court began applying the principle with a fair degree of consistency, requiring public schools to be religiously neutral, holding unconstitutional all major forms of tax support for church schools, and expanding the free exercise of religion except in cases of "compelling" government interest.

It would be fair to conclude that for most of our history as a nation, implementation of the separation principle has ratcheted steadily forward, giving the United States the greatest degree of separation and free exercise of religion of any country. But dark clouds began to appear during the 1970s as religious fundamentalism and political ultraconservatism became closely allied.

Former antagonists, such as the Catholic bishops and Protestant fundamentalist leaders like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, began making common cause, joined by ultraconservative political groups eager to tap fundamentalist voter strength for other purposes.

Thanks to the packing of the Supreme Court by Presidents Reagan and Bush, the Court can no longer be relied upon to settle church-state controversies in a Jeffersonian-Madisonian manner.

Frank Mortyn

Physicist, editor of Contact, published by the Humanist Fellowship of San Diego.

It's 1992. Rioters are taking control of the streets of Los Angeles. The street gangs are the Blues and the Reds, known as Crips and Bloods. The gangs unite their efforts to defy the armed forces of Police

Chief Daryl Gates. And where is Chief Gates? He is sipping cocktails at a fund-raising party while Los Angeles begins to burn.

Now let us suppose, with about 50 dead in Los Angeles, that a national political leader feels called upon to comment. Hear Dan Quayle, Vice-President of the United States, addressing the Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, May 19, 1992: "So I think the time has come to renew our public commitment to our Judeo-Christian values . . ."

A journalist has a similar urge. William A Rusher says in his comments on the Los Angeles riots in the Las Vegas Review-Journal, May 5, 1992: "Simply put, the secular humanists have been gnawing away at the foundations of Western Civilization . . . and have finally succeeded in producing, especially in our inner cities, an almost totally amoral kind of human being . . ."

Well, now! What if secular humanism were swept away and Christianity put in charge? What would happen? What would be different? History can tell us. That's what history is for. Let's go back to the year 532 CE.

* * * * *

They lie scattered across the benches. Sprawled on the stone floors of the stadium. The sun beats down on the silence. The bodies have not yet rotted much. There is still no noticeable stench. But rats have already discovered the carnage.

Close to the exits, panic-stricken thousands had clawed at one another. They were trying to escape the advancing soldiers of the Imperial Guard. Few succeeded. Many people were crushed, their bodies mangled underfoot. The hum and buzz of flies was the only sound now over this spectacle of death.

From all around, the air is suddenly alive with the joyous sound of bells. Hundreds of bells, from hundreds of churches. No sound of any call to Allah or indication of any other religion besides Christianity. This is Christian City. In the broad boulevards and narrow alleys around the Hippodrome, thousands and thousands of corpses lie on the paving stones. They lie where they fell.

They had fallen, screaming in terror, pursued by the Guards.

Who were these dead? They were the youth of Christian City. They had formed rival gangs. The Blues and the Greens. The two rival gangs had united to riot together in their contempt for the Emperor. The Emperor Justinian was overcome with fear. Get ready to flee, said the Emperor.

But Justinian was saved! His wife, the Empress Theodora, was stronger than he. She gave courage to the Emperor and his followers. They decided to stay and fight. This was the woman who had been on the stage, no princess but merely a showgirl. The people of Constantinople called her "whore".

The Emperor's swordsmen were highly trained. They were proud professionals, carrying on the traditions of the Roman Empire. They were unflinchingly loyal to Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora. They killed rioters without mercy. The Guards did not take prisoners. They pursued the youth of Christian City and killed them. In five days of disorder, thirty thousand died. Their corpses tell us of life in Christian City, called Constantinople.

This was Christianity's showplace. Separation of Church and State? Not here. This was Christianity's chance. A chance to show history what Christianity can do when it achieves power over civil life. How did Christian City get started?

A Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great, claimed he had seen a cross in the sky. He went on to win in battle. For his own political ends, Constantine blessed Christianity. Henceforth, he said, Christianity would be an appropriate religion for the Empire. Christianity gained momentum which, to our day, it has never lost.

Emperor Constantine became a master planner of the Christian faith. Even in our own time you find him honored in sects of the Episcopal tradition. The Nicene Creed is recited; it was compiled in Constantine's reign. The mystical doctrine of the Trinity -- Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three gods in one -- is a product of the Ecumenical Council convened by Constantine. And he gave us Constantinople. From the beginning, it was Christian City. The showplace of the Faith. Church

and State not separated but united. Christianity was triumphant.

Constantinople was far more Christian than Rome. Rome was just a Christian excrescence layered upon the foundations of hundreds of years of paganism. No -- Constantinople was utterly Christian, in conception as well as design. It smothered the remains of smaller towns which had preceded it -- such as Byzantium. And who remembers the Greek settlement of Thrace? The great new metropolis of Constantinople had conquered its forebears. Constantinople was the jewel in the crown of our Lord Jesus Christ. Constantinople was Christianity in full flower. It deserves the title: Christian City.

See the blood, running across the paving stones. Hear the wailings, the mourning of countless bereaved citizens. Make yourself at home, visitor. You are in Christian City.

See the Hippodrome now. Only a few Guards remain. The flies are buzzing more loudly now, clouds of them hovering over every mound of corpses. Let us stroll the streets of Christian City. Hear the mourners wailing in just about every house. See those people! Some weep, mourning their dead. Searchers pick their way among the dead, seeking their kin. The pavements are still wet with blood.

But -- wait! Lift up your eyes to the horizon. See the churches! Oh, just look at that marvelous church! What a masterpiece! The whole world will wonder. The Emperor Justinian, he who presided over the massacre of thirty thousand in five days of urban disorders, will be remembered in 1992 as the builder of Hagia Sophia. Still standing, after 1400 years? Yes. For Justinian built it to last. He succeeded. And visitors from all the world still come to see it.

The glories of Constantinople's architecture are stunning. Historians will write appreciatively of the "Byzantine" style. It has the flavor of the East, in the service of Christian faith. The result is dazzling. Decorated with marvelous mosaics, each church models the cosmos with its portrayals of celestial beings.

Just look at Christian City's mighty walls! There are two walls, one inside the other. And atop the walls are ninety-six towers! How can an enemy ever take such a city? In Rome the barbarians will rule. But Constantinople? Never! So they thought. For Constantinople shows the world what a society is like when Christianity governs every aspect of its operation. A thoroughly Christianized civilization! A Christian Reconstructionist dream.

The thirty thousand corpses are beginning to stink.

Let it be clear to us all! The worst, the bloodiest urban riots of all time took place in the most Christian of cities, Constantinople in the year 532 CE.

Meanwhile, where were the humanists? Not much in evidence, unfortunately. The Dark Ages were upon Europe.

But across the sea in Athens, we can suppose that there were still a few philosophers, clad in white, walking quietly amid the trees. If their pavements were slippery, it was because of fruit from olive branches, not blood from tormented bodies, shed by Christian swords.

Today's freethinkers can look with sorrow on the spectacle of death which occurred when Christianity took charge of civil life. The more you know about it, the more likely you are to say to the Christians: "Thank you but NO to your vision of a Christian society". It had its chance. Did Christian City work? Thirty thousand deaths say "No".

Kersey Graves

The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors (1875)

Researches into oriental history reveal the remarkable fact that stories of incarnate gods resembling the miraculous character of Jesus Christ have been prevalent in most if not all the principal religious heathen nations of antiquity; and the accounts and narrations of some of these deific incarnations bear such a striking resemblance to that of the Christian Savior -- not only in their general features, but in some cases in the most

minute details, from the legend of the immaculate conception to that of the crucifixion, and subsequent ascension into heaven -- that one might almost be mistaken for the other.

Many claims of this kind -- claims of beings invested with divine honor (deified) -- have come forward and presented themselves at the bar of the world, with their credentials, to contest the verdict of Christendom, in having proclaimed Jesus Christ, "the only son, and sent of God". Many Messiahs, Saviors, and Sons of God, according to history or tradition, have, in past times, descended from heaven and taken upon themselves the form of men, clothing themselves with human flesh, and furnishing incontestable evidence of a divine origin, by various miracles, marvelous works, and superlative virtues; and finally these Jesus Christs (accepting their character for the name) laid the foundation for the salvation of the world, and ascended back to heaven.

Chrishna of Hindostan; Budha Sakia of India; Salivahana of Bermuda; Zulis, or Zhule, also Osiris and Orus, of Egypt; Odin of the Scandinavians; Crite of Chaldea; Zoroaster and Mithra of Persia; Baal and Taut, of Phoenicia; Indra of Tibet; Bali of Afghanistan; Jao of Nepal; Wittoba of the Bilingonese; Thammuz of Syria; Atys of Phrygia; Xamolxis of Thrace; Zoar of the Bonzes; Adad of Assyria; Deva Tat, and Sammonocadam of Siam; Alcides of Thebes; Mikado of the Sintos; Beddru of Japan; Hesus or Eros, and Bremrillah, of the Druids; Thor, son of Odin, of the Gauls; Cadmus of Greece; Hil and Feta of the Mandaites; Gentaut and Quexalcote of Mexico; Universal Monarch of the Sibyls; Ischy of the island of Formosa; Divine Teacher of Plato; Holy One of Xaca; Fohi and Tien of China; Adonis, son of the virgin Io of Greece; Ixion and Quirinus of Rome; Prometheus of Caucasus; Mohamud, or Mohomet, of Arabia.

These have all received divine honors, have nearly all been worshipped as Gods, or sons of God; were mostly incarnated as Christs, Saviors, Messiahs, or Mediators; not a few of them were reputedly born of virgins; some of them filling a character almost identical with that ascribed by the Christians' Bible to Jesus Christ; many of them, like him, are reported to have been crucified; and all of them, taken together, furnish a prototype and parallel for

nearly every important incident and wonder-inciting miracle, doctrine and precept recorded in the New Testament, of the Christians' Savior. Surely, with so many Saviors the world cannot, or should not, be lost.

In a word, nearly every miraculous or marvelous story, moral precept, or tenet of religious faith, noticed in either the Old or New Testament scriptures of Christendom, there is to be found an antitype for, or outline of, somewhere in the sacred records of bibles of the oriental heathen nations, making equal if not higher pretention to a divine emanation and divine inspiration.

This is admitted by all historians, even the most orthodox, to be of much more ancient date; for while Christians only claim, for the earthly advent of their Savior and the birth of their religion, a period less than nineteen hundred years in the past, on the contrary, most of the deific or divine incarnations of the heathen and their respective religions are, by the concurrent and united verdict of all history, assigned a date several hundred or several thousand years earlier, thus leaving the inference patent that so far as there has been any borrowing or transfer of materials from one system to another, Christianity has been the borrower.

And as nearly the whole outline and constituent parts of the Christian system are found scattered through these older systems, the query is at once sprung as to whether Christianity did not derive its materials from these sources -- that is, from heathenism, instead of from high heaven -- as it claims.

A J Mattill, Jr

Author, lecturer, and professor of biblical studies at several southern colleges

The more trust one puts in the Fourth Gospel's portrait of Jesus the more difficult it is to defend the sanity of Jesus. Thus psychologists have found that the megalomania of John's Jesus mounts ceaselessly, for he is continually occupied with his ego, openly proclaiming his messianic dignity. (John 6:29, 35, 38, 40, 47-58; 7:38; 8:12; 11:25-26; 14:6, 13-14) By way of contrast, the Jesus of the

Synoptics keeps his messiahship a secret. (Mark 9:9, etc) Thus the combined Jesus of all four gospels sometimes proclaims himself as Messiah and sometimes refrains from doing so, which is conduct like that of paranoids.

"The spiritual gospel" contradicts the Synoptics in numerous ways. Here are just a few:

Mark 1:4,9; 10:18 vs John 1:29-34; 3:26

Matthew 4:12, 17; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:19,20 vs John 3:22-24

Matthew 17:11-13 vs John 1:19-21

Matthew 21:12,13 vs John 2:11-16 (timing)

Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7 vs John 13:1, 2, 29; 18:28; 19:14, 31, 42

Critical scholarship rejects the traditional authorship of many of the twenty-seven books in the NT canon, and has been even more successful in setting aside the traditional authorship of numerous OT books. Whereas the church has claimed that the Bible was written by some forty amanuenses of God, with one viewpoint, we can now quip that the Bible was written by some four hundred authors and redactors with four hundred different points of view. The church, on the other hand, has claimed inspired prudence in choosing aright the books of the canon as books really written by the authoritative persons whose names they bear.

In the study of the NT's teachings on "last things", more clearly than anywhere else, we see that NT scholarship is largely responsible for destroying Christian faith. A large segment of NT specialists is convinced that the people of the NT believed they were living in the last century, not the first. Jesus' title, "Messiah", means "inaugurator of the end". Thus Jesus came preaching, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand".

Therefore, Jesus was mistaken on the all-important matter of last things. He made solemn promises he failed to keep. We can be as certain that Jesus taught the speedy coming of the kingdom as we

can be of any matter in biblical studies. If Jesus had had his way, and his ministry to usher in the kingdom had not failed, we and this world would not be here today. The first century CE would have been the last.

The following verses indicate how pervasive this imminent expectation is in the NT:

Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:23; 16:28; 23:39; 24:34; 26:29

Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; 13:30; 15:43

Luke 9:27; 10:8-11; 19:11; 21:32; 22:18; 23:50-51

1 Corinthins 7:26-31; 15:51-52

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16

Hebrews 10:25

James 5:8-9

1 Peter 4:7, 17

1 John 2:18

In short, NT writers looked forward to the personal return of Christ in their own generation, and they believed that the nearness of Jesus' return was the regulative idea in their lives. The implications of this miscalculation are enormous. If the apostles and others were mistaken as to the immediacy of the end, then they may have been mistaken about Jesus' messiahship, on which that expectation was founded, and also mistaken about his resurrection, on which their belief in his messiahship was strengthened, if not founded.

Let's give three cheers to creationists for the services they are rendering to the cause of rational religion.

For example, they demonstrate beautifully that we must take the creation stories of Genesis at face value. Accordingly, there is only one way to understand the "days" of Genesis 1:1-2:4, and that is as literal 24-hour days, not as geological eras. Creationists list twenty or more contradictions that arise between science and scripture if the days are taken as geological eras instead of ordinary days. For example:

- Genesis says that plant life, even in such advanced form as the fruit tree, was made one day before the sun and stars, but this would have been impossible if the day were really an aeon, as plants must have sunlight.
- The Bible says that there was no rain on the earth up at least to the time of man's appearance. (Genesis 2:5) Geology says rains have existed since the earth first cooled.
- The Bible says plants appeared on the third day and insects not until the sixth. This would be impossible if the days were aeons, since plants require insect pollination for their continued survival through reproduction.

Creationists have also shown irrefutably that those Christians who regard the creation stories as myths or allegories are undermining the rest of Scripture, for if there was no Adam, there was no fall; and if there was no fall, there was no hell; and if there was no hell, there was no need of Jesus as Second Adam and Incarnate Savior, crucified and risen. As a result, the whole biblical system of salvation collapses.

Creationists likewise correctly maintain that, if the biblical stories of the beginning of the world are myths, then the stories of the virginal conception and of the end of the world may be myths, too. Once we get on this mythological slide, we cannot logically stop sliding until we hit the bottom at agnosticism or atheism.

Creationists insist that liberal Christians face the problem of why God chose to use five billion years of chance variations, natural selection, geological upheavals, storm, disease, extinctions, struggle, suffering, and death as an inscrutable prelude to his creation of man right at the very tail-end of geological time. The creationist says "God is not the author of confusion".

Creationists are blind to the fact that they serve a cruel God who created this cold-blooded system where life feeds on life, where the strong destroy the weak, and where it is either kill or be killed, eat or be eaten. If creationists trace such a harsh system to the fall rather than the original creation, as they do, then they must admit that it was hardly just for God to curse all people and animals for all

time for what two human beings did at the beginning of time.

The creationist's God is a bit too human, for he changed his mind and became sorry that he created people and beasts and decided to destroy all but a sample of them in a worldwide flood, only to start the whole bloody process once more. (Genesis 6:5-7) Thus creationists intentionally show the unacceptability of the liberal Christians' God of evolution, and in so doing they unintentionally reveal the brutality of their own God of creation.

Creationists admit that the problem of relating biblical chronology to geological chronology is their most serious problem. According to Genesis 5 and 11, the period from Adam to Abraham is about 2000 years. Since Abraham lived about 2000 BC, Adam was created about 4000 BC. Archbishop Ussher of the seventeenth century calculated that creation took place in 4004 BC. Then Dr John Lightfoot, one of the most learned 17th-century scholars, studied the matter more profoundly and concluded that creation was performed by the Trinity on October 23, 4004 BC at 9:00 AM, 45th meridian time.

Modern creationists, following Ussher and Lightfoot, rely solely upon biblical data as the only proper method of determining the date of creation. They are rather imprecise about the exact time of creation, generally claiming only that it took place less than ten thousand years ago. But even such a "young universe" is several thousand years older than the universe of Genesis. Hence, creationists do not uphold the accuracy of the Bible, for if God wrote the Bible, as they claim, then God should have been exact and not a few thousand years off.

Creationists are willing to admit that there are mini-gaps in the genealogies of Genesis that total several thousand years, but there are no maxi-gaps to extend the age of the earth to millions of years. But why, if God directly dictated genealogical lists to Moses, should there be any gaps at all?

By showing that no compromise is possible between the Bible and evolution, the creationists have reduced all of the complexities of the creation-evolution problem to one simple question: Is Genesis correct in saying that God created the

world in six 24-hour days? Not many thinking people will have difficulty answering that question.

So, three cheers for creationists, for they have refuted their own case by demonstrating that the Bible is not inerrant in its chronology of the cosmos, which means, on their own admission, that the Bible is not inspired at all.

John E Remsburg

The Ten Commandments in the OT and the Sermon on the Mount, including the Golden Rule, in the NT, are supposed to comprise the best moral teachings of the Bible. They are declared to be so far superior to all other moral codes as to preclude the idea of human origin.

The Decalogue is a very imperfect moral code; not at all superior to the religious and legislative codes of other ancient peoples. The last six of these commandments, while not above criticism, are in the main just, and were recognized alike by Jew and Gentile. They are a crude attempt to formulate the crystallized experiences of mankind. The first four (first three according to Catholic and Lutheran versions) possess no moral value whatever. They are simply religious emanations from the corrupt and disordered brain of priestcraft.

Christians claim that unbelievers have no moral standard, that they alone have such a standard -- an infallible standard -- the Bible. If we ask them to name the best precept in this standard they cite the Golden Rule. And yet the Golden Rule is purely a human rule of conduct. "Whatsoever ye (men, not God) would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them". This rule enjoins what Christians profess to condemn, that every person shall form his own moral standard. In this rule, the so-called divine laws are totally ignored.

The Golden Rule, so far as the Bible is concerned, is a borrowed gem. Chinese, Greek, and Roman sages had preached and practiced it centuries before the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. This rule, one of the best formulated by the ancients, is not, however, a perfect rule of human conduct. It does not demand that our desires shall

always be just. But it does recognize and enjoin the principle of reciprocity, and is immeasurably superior to the rule usually practiced by the professed followers of Jesus: Whosoever we would that you should do unto us, do it; and whatsoever we wish to do unto you, that will we do.

The three Christian virtues, faith, hope, and charity, fairly represent this whole system of so-called Bible morals -- two false or useless precepts to one good precept. Charity is a true virtue, but "faith and hope", to quote Volney, "may be called the virtues of dupes for the benefit of knaves". And if the knaves have admitted charity to be the greatest of these virtues, it is because they are the recipients and not the dispensers of it.

The noblest types of manhood have been slandered, anathematized, and slain by Christians, while the gods, heroes, patriarchs, prophets, priests of the Bible have been presented as the highest models of moral excellence. Of these, Jehovah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Paul, and Christ are represented as the greatest and the best.

Who was Jehovah? A being of terrific character -- cruel, vindictive, capricious, and unjust, according to Jefferson.

Who was Abraham? An insane barbarian patriarch who married his sister, denied his wife, and seduced her handmaid; who drove one child into the desert to starve, and made preparations to butcher the other.

Who was Jacob? Another patriarch, who won God's love by deceiving his father, cheating his uncle, robbing his brother, practicing bigamy with two of his cousins, and committing fornication with two of his housemaids.

Who was Moses? A model of meekness; a man who boasted of his own humility; a man who murdered an Egyptian and hid his body in the sand; a man who exterminated whole nations to secure the spoils of war; a man who butchered in cold blood thousands of captive widows; a man who tore dimpled babes from the breasts of dying mothers and put them to a cruel death; a man who made orphans of thirty-two thousand innocent girls, and

turned sixteen thousand of them over to the brutal lusts of a savage soldiery.

Who was David? A man after God's own heart. A vulgar braggadocio, using language to a woman the mere quoting of which would send me to prison; a traitor, desiring to lead an enemy's troops against his own countrymen; a thief and robber, plundering the country on every side; a liar, uttering wholesale falsehoods to screen himself from justice; a red-handed butcher, torturing and slaughtering thousands of men, women, and children, making them pass through burning brick-kilns, carving them up with saws and axes, and tearing them in pieces under harrows of iron; a polygamist, with a harem of wives and concubines; a drunken debauchee, dancing half-naked before the maids of his household; a lecherous old libertine, abducting and ravishing the wife of a faithful soldier; a murderer, having his faithful soldier put to death after desolating his home; a hoary-headed fiend, foaming with vengeance on his dying bed, demanding with his latest breath the deaths of two aged men, one of whom had most contributed to make his kingdom what it was, the other a man to whom he had promised protection.

Who was Paul? A religious fanatic; a Jew and a Christian. As a Jew, in the name of Jehovah, he persecuted Christians; as a Christian, in the name of Christ, he persecuted Jews; and both as a Jew and a Christian, and in the name of both Jehovah and Christ, he practiced dissimulation and hallowed falsehood.

I refuse to accept the Bible as a moral guide, because it sanctions nearly every vice and crime. Here is the long list of wrongs which it authorizes and defends:

Lying and deception, theft and robbery, wars of conquest, cannibalism, slavery, adultery and prostitution, intemperance, ignorance, unkindness to children, tyranny, cheating, murder, human sacrifices, witchcraft, polygamy, obscenity, vagrancy, injustice to women, cruelty to animals, intolerance and persecution.

The Bible is, for the most part, the crude literature of a people who lived 2000 years, and more, ago.

Certain principles of right and wrong they recognized, but the finer principles of morality were unknown to them. They were an ignorant people. An ignorant people is generally a religious people, and a religious people nearly always an immoral people. They believed that they were God's chosen people -- God's peculiar favorites -- and that because of this they had the right to rob and cheat, to murder and enslave the rest of mankind. From these two causes, chiefly, ignorance and religion, ie, superstition, emanated the immoral deeds and opinions which found expression in the writings of their priests and prophets.

The passages in the bible which deal with vice and crime may be divided into three classes: (1) There are passages which condemn vice and crime. These I endorse. (2) There are many passages in which the crimes and vices of the people are narrated merely as historical facts without either sanctioning or condemning them. The book merits no censure because of these. (3) There are numerous passages which sanction vice and crime. These, and these alone, suffice to prove the charges that I make against the Bible as a moral guide.

Howard M Teeple

The fundamentalists' attitude toward the Bible determines their method of interpreting it. One feature of their method is the screening out of

evidence they dislike. When contradictions are encountered in the Bible, one statement may be accepted and the conflicting statement ignored. An example is the question of how many animals of a kind were taken aboard the ark in the Flood story. [The Flood story contains multiple contradictions.]

God's instruction to Noah to take two of each kind (Gen 6:19) is readily accepted, while the contradictory instruction to take seven pairs of birds and seven pairs of clean animals (Gen 7:2-3) is usually ignored. If someone does call attention to such details, he is liable to be denounced for "picking the Bible to pieces". Actually, the failure to consider all the evidence is a violation of another basic principle of scholarship. The only way really to understand the Bible is to consider all the evidence, both inside and outside it.

The only way to understand the cause of the inconsistencies is to recognize that we have before us an example of ancient composite literature. Two separate written sources have been interwoven into one account, without rewriting them to make their vocabulary, style, and ideas agree with each other. This produces contradictions and inconsistencies, and sometimes duplications.

Composite literature was very prevalent in the ancient world, and a major contribution of modern biblical scholarship is the recognition that much of both the OT and the NT is composite. The same two sources that are used in the Genesis Flood story run through the Pentateuch [first five books of the OT], where they are combined with other source material.

When the Genesis Flood is traced back to its ultimate sources, which are the Sumerian story and the Babylonian versions of it, those sources very clearly are fictional. The sources are poetry, composed and transmitted for entertainment and to promote various ideas.

The differences between the Hebrew versions and the Mesopotamian versions are not at all an indication that the Hebrew accounts are independent in origin. Josephus, writing in the first century of the Christian era, clearly illustrates for us the ease with which Jews (and others) readily appropriated and reinterpreted foreign material.

When belief in the literal truth of the whole Bible becomes essential in a religion, that religion is placed on a very shaky foundation. It is easily demonstrated that the Bible is a human product of its time, containing some history, some fiction, some borrowing from neighboring religions, some truth, some errors, and some contradictions.

Sherwin T Wine

Despite all the evidence that much of what the Torah says happened is different from what really happened, no one has boldly written a popular alternative to this priestly epic. The real history stays hidden in scholarly journals. No matter what deficiencies critical research discovers in the narrative of the Torah, the Torah never loses its status.

Since the rabbinic elite had a monopoly on published literature, personalities and events that did not fit into the rabbinic scheme were never mentioned. If you were a rabbi and had an opinion about whether chickens should be eaten with milk, you got a handsome citation in the Talmud. If you were a poet and sang the praises of Yaheh, the prayerbook acknowledged your contribution. But if you were the first Jewish banker or the best Jewish humorist, history has forgotten your name. The rabbis, like most religious elites, were not interested in preserving your memory. Only in the last two centuries would you have a chance for recognition.

The laws of the Bible and the Talmud, the stories of sacred scriptures, the petitions of the prayerbook are of human creation. They are the products of human insight, human desire, and human vested interests. They are reflections of particular times and particular places. They are passionate propaganda in religious and political arguments. The stories of King Saul were written by the priestly employees of his enemy King David. The tale of Jezebel was composed by her prophetic

opponents. The sacrificial ritual of Leviticus was designed by the priests who would benefit from it.

Human need -- not divine aloofness -- is responsible for what Jews did and said. It is also responsible for distorting what Jews did and said. The motivation for recording events and happenings was no dispassionate desire to keep a diary. It was the obvious need to use history to push political programs and religious ideologies. Is the story of the covenant between Abraham and Yahweh a journalistic observation of an actual event? Or is it a justification for the Jewish claim to all of ancient Canaan?

Holidays are not the children of supernatural decrees. They have their beginnings in the human response to natural events. Passover is not the spontaneous invention of a heavenly king. It is an evolving festival that served the nationalist fervor of patriotic rulers. Nor is Yom Kippur the creation of a judgmental god. It is a priestly device to increase the dread of Yahweh. The supernatural did not use the natural to promote its agenda. The human used the supernatural to advance its vested interests.

Seeing God behind all events is not necessary to explain what happens; human desire and natural laws do quite well. It is also potentially embarrassing. If Yahweh arranged for the Exodus, he also arranged for the Holocaust. The theological mileage that one can get from Jewish history is limited. Theology is always more interesting when it is relegated to its appropriate niche in the department of anthropology, a study of human fear and imagination.

Jews are the products of their real experience -- not the products of what the rabbis said their experience was. The struggle for power between kings and priests, priests and rabbis was an important political dimension in Jewish development. The Bible and the Talmud were the result of these political controversies, and the editors of these documents do not deal kindly with their opponents -- who were equally as Jewish.

It is dangerous to pick your heroes and villains when you are able to read only one side of a religious controversy. The rabbis made sure that

their view of Jewish history would prevail when they suppressed or destroyed all opposing points of view. As the victims of religious censorship, we should be aware of our victimization. The enemies of the rabbis might have given us a more balanced view of early Jewish history if their writings had survived.

The obsession with God is part of the official documents of the religious establishment, but it may not have been an obsession of the masses of the people. In fact, we know from all the denunciations in the Bible that polytheism was common in ancient Israel and that female deities (whom the prophets abhorred) were very popular.

The source of monotheistic ideas is no great spiritual ingenuity. It is a political structure called imperialism. World gods are the reflection of world government. Just as tribal government features tribal gods and national government features national gods, so do empires sponsor the birth of supergods. Monotheism was no Jewish invention. The Egyptians, the Persians, and the Greeks all had their fling at it. Aton, Mazda, and Zeus became divine superstars just like Yahweh -- and with more reason. Yahweh, the world ruler, coincides with the advent of Assyrian, Chaldean, and Persian empires. He is a political explanation, not a spiritual revolution.

From the very beginning, monotheism was an ill-fitting shoe. It could never adequately explain the defeats and humiliations that pious Jews experienced. Only the addition of future rewards and punishment made it fit better. Popular religion still kept its demons and evil spirits, reflections of the disorder and disharmony of things. The masses experienced the terror of the world. No serene orderly deity was enough to handle the difficulties of daily living. In the end, the groom broke the glass at the end of the wedding ceremony to frighten away the evil spirits (whom Yahweh was obviously incapable of disciplining). Folk religion and official religion very often did not coincide.

What is historically important is not the prophets of the distant past, but the bourgeois reformers and

Marxist radicals who used them. Dead heroes are the most useful authorities. They cannot challenge what you make their words mean.

Personal fulfillment and fame -- important modern motivations -- were not the reasons why the documents of the religious establishment were written. They were written as persuasive literature, or what we call propaganda. They were intended to persuade Jews to defend certain ideas, to adopt certain practices, and to obey certain authorities. They were also intended to persuade Jews to reject certain ideas, to discard certain practices, and to ignore certain authorities.

Jewish history is the tale of intense rivalries. Different groups vie for power, and their literature is their propaganda. The dead David and the dead Moses become the symbols of competing elites, who tell their stories to serve their interests. What happened to the Jews is no different from what happened to other nations. New groups tried to overthrow old groups. Having succeeded and feeling vulnerable, they felt the need to justify their rule.

John Allegro

The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross

The whole point of a mystery cult was that few people knew its secret doctrines. So far as possible, the initiates did not commit their special knowledge to writing. Normally the secrets of the sect were transmitted orally, novices being required to learn directly from their mentors by heart, and placed under the most violent oaths never to disclose the details even under torture. When such special instruction was committed to writing, care would be taken that it should be read only by the members of the sect. This could be done by using a special code or cypher, as is the case with certain of the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, discovery of such obviously coded material on a person would render him suspect to the authorities. Another way of passing information was to conceal the

message, incantations, or special names within a document ostensibly concerning another subject.

The temple was designed with a large measure of uniformity over the whole of the Near East now recognizable as a microcosm of the womb. It was divided into three parts: the Porch, representing the lower end of the vagina up to the hymen, or Veil; the Hall, or vagina itself; and the inner sanctum, or Holy of Holies, the uterus. The priest, dressed as a penis, anointed with various saps and resins as representing the divine semen, enters through the doors of the Porch, the "labia" of the womb, past the Veil or "hymen" and so into the Hall.

Edward Carpenter

Pagan and Christian Creeds

The briefest glance at the history of the Christian churches -- the horrible rancours and revenges of the clergy and the sects against each other in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, the heresy-hunting crusades at Beziers and other places, and the massacres of the Albigenses in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the witch-findings and burnings of the sixteenth and seventeenth, the hideous science-urged and bishop-blessed warfare of the twentieth -- horrors fully as great as any we can charge of the Aztes or the Babylonians -- must give us pause.

The well-known T-shaped cross was in use in pagan lands long before Christianity, as a representation of the male member.

The doctrine of the Saviour is world-wide and world-old, and Christianity merely appropriated it, the same as the other cults did, and gave it a special flavor.

The main Christian doctrines and festivals, besides a great mass of affiliated legend and ceremonial, are really quite directly derived from, and related to, preceding Nature worship; and it has only been by

a good deal of deliberate mystification and falsification that this derivation has been kept out of sight.

Albert Pike

The Morals and Dogma of Scottish Rite Freemasonry

Born in a Protestant land, we are of that faith. If we had opened our eyes to the light under the shadows of St Peter's in Rome, we should have been devout Catholics; born in the Jewish quarter of Alepp, we should have condemned Christ as an impostor; in Constantinople, we should have cried "Allah il Allah, God is great and Mahomet is his prophet". Birth, place and education give us our faith. Few believe in any religion because they have examined the evidences of its authenticity, and made up a formal judgment upon weighing the testimony. Not one man in ten thousand knows anything about the proofs of his faith. We believe what we are taught; and those are most fanatical who know least of the evidences on which their creed is based.

The Church of Rome claimed despotism over the soul, and over the whole life from the cradle to the grave. It gave and sold absolutions for past and future sins. It claimed to be infallible in matters of faith. It decimated Europe to purge it of heretics. It decimated America to convert the Mexicans and Peruvians. The history of all is or will be the same -- acquisition, dismemberment and ruin. To seek to subjugate the will of others and to take the soul captive, because it is the exercise of the highest power, seems to be the highest object of human ambition. It is at the bottom of all proselytizing and propagandism.

Did the Deity leave the whole world without Light for two score centuries, to illuminate only a little corner of Palestine and a brutal, ignorant, and ungrateful people?

J M Roberts, Esq

Antiquity Unveiled

Will any Catholic or Protestant prelate, priest, or clergyman tell us why the Christian emperor, Theodosius the First, should have ordered the destruction of the Serapeum Library of Alexandria, if not to destroy the evidence it contained of the spurious nature of the Christian religion and its heathen philosophical origin?

As for the Sermon on the Mount, of which so much is made, it is no more than a patchwork of utterances found in the Old Testament.

There is not a conception associated with Christ that is not common to some or all of the Savior cults of antiquity.

Religions, like organisms and opinions, struggle for survival, and the fittest survive. That is to say, those survive which are fittest for the actual environment, not fittest from the point of view of another higher environment. What, then, was the religion best adapted to the populations of the decaying Roman Empire, in which ignorance and mean subjection were slowly corroding alike intelligence and character, leaving the civilized provinces unable to hold their ground against the barbarians?

Christianity. This was the religion for the Dark Ages.

Prior to the fourth century, there was frequent and general mention of "Christos" and his worship to the east of Rome. But nowhere can be found any authentic mention at that time of a "Jesus Christ". It was not until after the Nicean Council that the name Jesus Christ was ever known to the world.

To get rid of the damning fact that there is no historical basis for their theological fictions, the Christian priesthood have been guilty of the heinous crime of destroying nearly all traces of the

concurrent history of the first two centuries of the Christian era. What little of it they have permitted to come down to us, they have so altered and changed, as to destroy its historical value.

Barbara Walker

The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects
and *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*

The rise of Hitler's Germany provides an interesting case in point, showing a nation swept by militaristic sentiment coupled with a sense of divine mission. The churches accepted Hitler's warmongering with religious joy. In April 1937, a Christian organization in the Rhineland passed a resolution that Hitler's word was the law of God and possessed "divine authority". Reichsminister for Church Affairs Hans Kerrl announced: "There has arisen a new authority as to what Christ and Christianity really are -- that is Adolf Hitler. Adolf Hitler is the true Holy Ghost". And so the pious gave him their blessing, and the churches gave him God's.

The martyrs of the famous Roman "persecutions" under such emperors as Nero and Diocletian were largely invented, since there were no records of any such specific martyrdoms. Names were picked at random from ancient tombstones, and the martyrtales were written to order. In reality, it was the Christian church that did much more persecuting and made many more martyrs than Rome had ever done, because religious tolerance was the usual Roman policy.

Christian historians often give the impression that Europe's barbarians welcomed the new faith, which held out a hope of immortality and a more kindly ethic. The impression is false. The people didn't willingly give up the faith of their ancestors, which they considered essential to the proper functioning of the earth's cycles. They had their own hope of immortality and their own ethic, in many ways a kinder ethic than that of Christianity, which was imposed on them by force. Justinian obtained 70,000 conversions in Asia Minor by methods that

were so cruel that the subject populations eventually adopted Islam in order to rid themselves of the rigors of Christian rule. As a rule, heathen folk resisted Christianity as long as they could, even after their rulers had gone over to the new faith for its material rewards. Certain words reveal by their derivation some of the opposition met by missionaries. The pagan Savoyards called Christians "idiots", hence cretin, "idiot", descended from Chretian, "Christian". German pagans coined the term bigot, from *bei Gott*, an expression constantly used by the monks.

Radbod, king of the Frisians, refused to abandon this faith when a Christian missionary informed him that Valhala* was the same as the Christians' hell. Where were his own ancestors, Radbod wanted to know, if there was no Valhala? He was told they were burning in hell because they were heathens. "Dastardly priest!" Radbod cried. "How dare you say my ancestors have gone to hell? I would rather -- yes, by their god, the great Woden, I swear -- I would ten thousand times rather join those heroes in their hell, than be with you in your heaven of priests!"

*In Norse mythology, Valhalla is a majestic, enormous hall ruled over by the god Odin.

The discovery that the Gospels were forged, centuries later than the events they described, is still not widely known even though the Catholic Encyclopedia admits, "The idea of a complete and clear-cut canon of the New Testament existing from the beginning has no foundation in history". No extant manuscript can be dated earlier than the 4th century CE; most were written even later. The oldest manuscripts contradict one another, as also do even the present canon of synoptic Gospels.

The most "historical" figure in the Gospels was Pontius Pilate, to whom Jesus was presented as "king" of the Jews and simultaneously as a criminal deserving the death penalty for "blasphemy" because he called himself Christ, Son of the Blessed. This was no real crime. Eastern provinces swarmed with self-styled Christs and Messiahs,

calling themselves Sons of God and announcing the end of the world. None of them was executed for "blasphemy".

About the beginning of the 9th century, bones, teeth, hair, garments, and other relics of fictitious saints were conveniently "found" all over Europe and Asia and triumphantly installed in the reliquaries of every church, until all Catholic Europe was falling to its knees before what Calvin called its anthill of bones.

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Established 500 years before Christianity and widely publicized throughout the Middle East, Buddhism exerted more influence on early Christianity than church fathers liked to admit, since they viewed Oriental religions in general as devil worship. Stories of the Buddha and his many incarnations circulated incessantly throughout the ancient world, especially since Buddhist monks traveled to Egypt, Greece, and Asia Minor four centuries before Christ, to spread their doctrines. Many scholars have pointed out that the basic tenets of Christianity were basic tenets of Buddhism first; but it is also true that the ceremonies and trappings of both religions were more similar than either has wanted to acknowledge.

Of all savior-gods worshipped at the beginning of the Christian era, Osiris may have contributed more details to the evolving Christ figure than any other. Already very old in Egypt, Osiris was identified with nearly every other Egyptian god and was on the way to absorbing them all. He had well over 200 divine names. He was called the Lord of Lords, King of Kings, God of Gods. He was the Resurrection and the Life, the Good Shepherd, Eternity and Everlastingness, the god who made men and women to be born again. From first to last, Osiris was to the Egyptians the god-man who suffered, and died, and rose again, and reigned eternally in heaven. They believed that they would inherit eternal life, just as he had done.

Osiris' coming was announced by Three Wise Men: the three stars Mintaka, Anilam, and Alnitak in the

belt of Orion, which point directly to Osiris' star in the east, Sirius (Sothis), significator of his birth.

Certainly Osiris was a prototypical Messiah, as well as a devoured Host. His flesh was eaten in the form of communion cakes of wheat, the "plant of Truth". The cult of Osiris contributed a number of ideas and phrases to the Bible. The 23rd Psalm copied an Egyptian text appealing to Osiris the Good Shepherd to lead the deceased to the "green pastures" and "still waters" of the nefer-nefer land, to restore the soul to the body, and to give protection in the valley of the shadow of death (the Tuat). The Lord's Prayer was prefigured by an Egyptian hymn to Osiris-Amen beginning "O Amen, O Amen, who are in heaven". Amen was also invoked at the end of every prayer.

Astrology survives in our own culture because Christianity embraced it with one hand, while condemning it as a devilish art with the other. Church fathers like Augustine, Jerome, Eusebius, Chrysostom, Lactantius, and Ambrose all anathematized astrology, and the great Council of Toledo prohibited it for all time. Nevertheless, six centuries later the consistory and the dates of popes' coronations were determined by the zodiac; aristocratic prelates employed their own personal astrologers; and signs of the zodiac appeared all over church furnishings, tiles, doorways, manuscripts, and baptismal fonts. The traditional Twelve Days of Christmas were celebrated by taking astrological omens each day for the corresponding months of the coming year.

However absurd, these myths still maintain a hold on vast numbers of people deliberately kept in ignorance by an obsolete fundamentalism. Even educated adults sometimes insist that an omniscient god created the world for a purpose of his own.

[Regarding the story of Herod and the slaughter of infants:] Innocents were slaughtered in the myths of Sargon, Nimrod, Moses, Jason, Krishna, and Mordred, as well as in that of Jesus.

Early Christians repudiated the cross because it was pagan. Early images of Jesus represented him not on a cross, but in the guise of the Osirian or Hermetic "Good Shepherd", carrying a lamb.

The cross was also a male symbol of the phallic Tree of Life.

The plea for daily bread incorporated into the Lord's Prayer must have been a plea to the Goddess in earlier times, for she was always the giver of bread, the Grain Mother.

From the earliest ages, the concept of the Great Goddess was a trinity and the model for all subsequent trinities, female, male, or mixed. Even though Brahmins evolved a male trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva to play the parts of Creator, Preserved, and Destroyer, Tantric scriptures insisted that the Triple Goddess had created these gods in the first place. The Middle East had many trinities, most originally female. As time went on, one or two members of the triad turned male. The usual pattern was Father-Mother-Son, the Son figure envisioned as a Savior. Among Arabian Christians there was apparently a holy trinity of God, Mary, and Jesus, worshipped as an interchangeable replacement for the Egyptian trinity of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.

The biblical flood story, the deluge, was a late offshoot of a cycle of flood myths known everywhere in the ancient world. Thousands of years before the Bible was written, an ark was built by the Sumerian Ziusudra. In Akkad, the flood hero's name was Atrakhasis. In Babylon, he was Uta-Napishtim, the only mortal to become immortal. In Greece he was Deucalion, who repopulated the earth after the waters subsided, and after the ark landed on Mt Parnassos. In Armenia, the hero was Xisuthros -- a corruption of Sumerian Ziusudra -- whose ark landed on Mount Ararat. According to the original Chaldean account, the flood hero was

told by his god, "Build a vessel and finish it. By a deluge I will destroy substance and life. Cause thou to go up into the vessel the substance of all that has life".

Moses' flowering rod, river of blood, and tablets of the law were all symbols of the ancient Goddess. His miracle of drawing water from a rock was first performed by Mother Rhea after she gave birth to Zeus, and by Atalanta with the help of Artemis. His miracle of drying up the waters to travel dry-shod was earlier performed by Isis, or Hathor, on her way to Byblos.

The stone tablets of law supposedly given to Moses were copied from the Canaanite god Baal-Berith, God of the Covenant. Their Ten Commandments were similar to the commandments of the Buddhist Decalogue. In the ancient world, laws generally came from a deity on a mountaintop. Zoroaster received the tablets of law from Ahura Mazda on a mountaintop.

The church that slaughtered the heathen for worshipping false gods was itself guilty of worshipping false saints -- which, sometimes, were even the same deities as those of the heathen. The church never lost sight of practical common sense on one point, however -- saints were leading sources of its income, thanks to the mandatory pilgrimage system, donations, and tithes. The multitudes of phony or commercial saints are treated by modern Catholic scholars with a rather amused tolerance, as if the saint-makers' fantasies held something of the same charm as tales invented by bright children. It is rarely admitted that these fantasies were not intended to charm but rather to defraud. The saints were made up to earn money for the church, and many of the made-up saints are still doing so, for the church refrains from publicizing their spurious origins lest such publicity might disappoint the faithful -- which translated, means the donations might cease.

The Bible's Book of Revelation purports to be a doomsday vision experienced by St John the Divine, but it is in fact a collection of images and phrases from many sources. Literature of this kind was plentiful in the first few centuries CE.

Patriarchal Semites worshipped their own genitals, and swore binding oaths by placing a hand on each other's private parts, a habit still common among the Arabs. Words like testament, testify, and testimony still attest to the oaths sworn on the testicles. Biblical writers called the penis a "sinew that shrank", lying "upon the hollow of the thigh".

Agape or "love feast" was a rite of primitive Christianity, adapted from pagan sexual worship. Another name for the agape was synesaktism, that is, the imitation of Shaktism, which meant the Tantric kind of love feast involving sexual exchange of male and female fluids and a sense of transcendent unity drawn therefrom. Early church fathers of the more orthodox strain described this kind of worship and inveighed against it. Some time before the seventh century, the agape was declared a heresy and was suppressed.

A hint of the broad extent of phallic Christianity in England appeared after World War II when Professor Geoffrey Webb, of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, investigated a bomb-damaged altar of an old church and found a large stone phallus within it. Further researches showed that the altars of approximately 90% of English churches built before 138 had hidden stone phalli.

A change in attitude toward rape was one of the contrasts between the ancient world and the medieval one in western Europe. The Romans and Saxons punished rapists by death. Normans cut off a rapist's testicles and gouged his eyes out. The gypsies' Oriental heritage demanded the death penalty for the rapist. Hindu law said a rapist must be killed, even if his victim was of the lowest caste, and Untouchable; and his soul should "never be

pardoned". The Byzantine Code decreed that rapists must die and their property must be given to the victim, even if she was no better than a slave woman.

Christian laws changed the picture. Serfs' wives, sisters, or daughters were always sexually available to their overlords under the new regime. Peasant brides were raped by the baron before being turned over to their bridegrooms -- probably to be raped again. The Church made it illegal for any wife to refuse sexual intercourse unless it was a holy day when marital sex was prohibited. Therefore, marital rape was encouraged.

From the Inquisition's torturers, who usually raped their victims first, to Victorian doctors who attacked female genitals with leeches, many kinds of rape could be traced to what has been called "virulent woman-hatred in fundamentalist Christianity". Recent studies show that most rapists were professed members of a religious sect and learned to regard sex as evil, in the traditional Christian manner.

War is a primary patriarchal contribution to culture, almost entirely absent from the matriarchal societies of the Neolithic and early Bronze Ages. Even when Goddess-worshipping was beginning to give way to cults of aggressive gods, for a long time the appearance of the Goddess imposed peace on all hostile groups. Patriarchal gods tended to be warlike from their inception -- including, or even particularly, the Judeo-Christian God. The Old Testament's account of God's nature, purpose, and activities on behalf of his Chosen People boils down to a long painful record of war, corruption, rapine, and lust. But Christianity was never a pacifist religion. All-male Christianity was disseminated by violence.

It was always important for religious authorities to control literature, and to gain the legal right to destroy books that contradicted their own teachings. Few people were so assiduous in this endeavor as Christians. In the third to sixth centuries, whole libraries were burned, schools and universities destroyed, and citizens' books

confiscated throughout the Roman world, on the pretext of defending the church against paganism. Under the early Christian emperors, people were framed by ecclesiastical investigators who planted "magical writings" in their houses, then legally confiscated all possessions.

After burning books and closing pagan schools, the church dealt in another kind of forgery: falsification by omission. All European history was extensively edited by a church that managed to make itself the sole repository of literary and historical records. With all important documents assembled in the monasteries, and the lay public rendered illiterate, Christian history could be forged with impunity.

After temples were destroyed, monks and hermits were settled in the ruins to defile the site with their excrement, and to prevent reconstruction.

In 418 AD, a Catholic church council decided that every human child is born demonic as a result of its sexual conception, thus automatically damned unless baptized.

During a Catholic baptismal ceremony, the priest still addresses the baby: "I exorcise thee, thou unclean spirit . . . hear thy doom, O Devil accursed, Satan accursed."

This exorcism is euphemistically described as "a means to remove impediments to grace resulting from the effects of original sin and the power of Satan over nature . . ."

Thus, paganism was kinder to infants and their mothers than Christianity so that theologians often felt called upon to explain God's apparent cruelty in allowing infants to die unbaptized, so condemning them before they had a chance for salvation.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, churchmen insisted that God's cruelty was perfectly just. Said Martin Del Rio, SJ: "If, as is not uncommon, God permits children to be killed before they have been baptized, it is to prevent their committing in later life those sins which would make their damnation more severe. In this, God is neither cruel nor unjust,

since, by the mere fact of original sin, the children have already merited death . . ."

Joseph Wheless

Forgery in Christianity and Is It God's Word?

When the Christians were weak and powerless and subjected to occasional persecutions as "enemies of the human race", they were vocal and insistent advocates of liberty of conscience and freedom to worship whatever God one chose; the Christian "Apologies" to the Emperors abound in eloquent pleas for religious tolerance; and this was granted to them and to all by the Edict of Milan and other imperial decrees. But when by the favor of Constantine they got into the saddle of the State, they at once grasped the sword and began to murder and despoil all who would not pretend to believe as the Catholic priest commanded them to believe.

With the decline and fall of the Roman Empire the Christian religion spread and grew among the Barbarian destroyers of Rome. The Dark Ages contemporaneously spread their intellectual pall over Europe. Scarcely any but priests and monks could read. Charlemagne learned to wield the pen only to the extent of scrawling his signature. The worst criminals, provided they were endowed with the rare and magic virtue of knowing how to read even badly, enjoyed the "benefit of clergy" (ie, of clerical learning), and escaped immune or with greatly mitigated punishment.

There were no books save painfully written manuscripts, worth the ransom of princes, and utterly unattainable except by the very wealthy and by the Church; not till about 1450 was the first printed book known in Europe. The Bible existed only in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and the ignorant masses were totally ignorant of it other than what they heard from the priests, who told them that they must believe it or be tortured and killed in life and damned forever in the fires of hell after death. It is no wonder that faith flourished under conditions so exceptionally favorable.

The gospels are all priestly forgeries over a century after their pretended dates.

The clerical confessions of lies and frauds in the ponderous volumes of the Catholic Encyclopedia alone suffice to wreck the Church and to destroy utterly the Christian religion. The Church exists mostly for wealth and self-aggrandizement; to quit paying money to the priests would kill the whole scheme in a couple of years. This is the sovereign remedy.

If the pious Christians, confessedly, committed so many and so extensive forgeries and frauds to adapt these popular Jewish fairy-tales of their God and holy Worthies to the new Christian Jesus and his Apostles, we need feel no surprise when we discover these same Christians forging outright new wonder-tales of their Christ under the fiction of the most noted Christian names and in the guise of inspired Gospels, Epistles, Acts, and Apocalypses.

Half a hundred of false and forged Apostolic "Gospels of Jesus Christ", together with more numerous other "Scripture" forgeries, was the output, so far as known now of the lying pens of the pious Christians of the first two centuries of the Christian "Age of Apocryphal Literature".

If the Gospel tales were true, why should God need pious lies to give them credit? Lies and forgeries are only needed to bolster up falsehood. What better proof of his actuality than to exhibit letters written by him in his own handwriting? The "Little Liars of the Lord" were equal to the forgery of the signature of their God -- false letters in his name, as cited from that exhaustive mine of clerical falsities, the Catholic Encyclopedia.

The Hebrew and Greek religious forgers were so ignorant or careless of the principles of criticism, that they "interpolated" their fraudulent new matter into old manuscripts without taking care to erase or

suppress the previous statements glaringly contradicted by the new interpolations.

The 27 New Testament booklets, attributed to eight individual "Apostolic" writers, and culled from some 200 admitted forgeries called Gospels, Acts, and Epistles, constitute the present "canonical" or acceptedly inspired compendium of the primitive history of Christianity.

The so-called "canonical" books of the New Testament, as of the Old, are a mess of contradictions and confusions of text, to the present estimate of 150,000 and more "variant readings", as is well known and admitted.

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Both genealogies [of Jesus, as listed in Matthew and Luke] are false and forged lists of mostly fictitious names.

The Gentile Church of Christ has no divine sanction; was never contemplated nor created by Jesus Christ. The Christian Church is thus founded on a forgery of pretended words of the pretended Christ.

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The forged New Testament booklets and the foolish writings of the Fathers, are the sole evidence we have for the alleged facts and doctrines of our most holy Faith, as is admitted by the Catholic Encyclopedia itself.

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False prophecies and miracles and fraudulent relics were the chief reliance among the pagans, as among the Christians, for stimulating the faith, or credulity, of the ignorant and superstitious masses.

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It may be stated with assurance that not one of them [books of the Old Testament] bears the name of its true author; that every one of them is a composite work of many hands "interpolating" the

most anachronistic and contradictory matters into the original writings, and often reciting as accomplished facts things which occurred many centuries after the time of the supposed writer.

Anne Nicol Gaylor

This may be historically the most influential verse in all the Bible, because it was employed as the direct justification for the murder and torture of countless women.

Exodus 22:18: You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live. (NRSV)

That single verse, that single sentence with its divine sanction of belief in witches and its divine sanction of their death, gave Christians justification for the murder of thousands, some say millions, of women. This commandment was acted on by church and state, by clergy and king. It was the god-given rationale for the unspeakable torture and murder of women.

Although it has been almost three centuries since the last so-called witch was put to death by Christians, that verse is still there in Exodus, unchanged. When clergy, Sunday school teachers, and media tell everyone that the Bible is a good book, they never say: "Watch out for verses like Exodus 22:18. That's not so good". Or, "Don't do everything that God tells you to do". Or, "Careful, kids, the Bible is not a dependable behavior guide". You will never hear admonishments such as these from the pulpit or read them in your daily paper or hear it on the radio. Only freethinkers are saying these things.

Perhaps the Bible could be forgiven if it had only one terrible god-given verse. But it overflows with them.

Gallup tells us that 43% of the US population say that the Bible is the word of a god, although everything in it may not be literally true. This 43% probably do not believe in disembodied voices and curing blindness with spit, but they still pay homage and respect to a book filled with myth and superstition, absurdities and gross teachings.

Today it is a fact that a substantial number of citizens in this country are Bible literalists; they are fundamentalists. And we are told, again by pollsters, that fundamentalism is that part of the religious community that is on the increase. What that says to me is that there is an urgent need for education about what exactly is in the Bible. Aside from the fundamentalists, I think it is fair to say that we are a nation of Bible illiterates. The fundamentalists have read the Bible and to their discredit are still promoting it. They are the ones to watch.

If you were to follow the god of the Bible's teachings, here are some, just a very few, of the things you would do, the actions you would take:

1- Deuteronomy 22:20-21: If, however, this charge is true, that evidence of the young woman's virginity was not found, then they shall bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

You would kill a woman who was not a virgin when she married, even if she happened to be your own daughter. You would kill her in a terrible way: by stoning her to death. This instruction is part of the Mosaic Law, just as the Ten Commandments are part of it. And this commandment still is being carried out in parts of the Near East today.

2- Leviticus 20:9: All who curse father or mother shall be put to death; having cursed father or mother, their blood is upon them.

If your child hits you or swears at you, you are to put that child to death. [A kid with tourette syndrome is doomed. In fact, it's unlikely that any kids at all would survive their teen years.]

3- Deuteronomy 23:2: Those born of an illicit union shall not be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord.

If you attend church and know of a child born out of wedlock who attends your church, you would see

that the child was publicly exposed and could no longer be a member of the church.

4- Leviticus 20:13: If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.

Romans 1:27, 32: And in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. . . . They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die -- yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

You would advocate death for homosexuals. It's very, very clear in the Bible.

5- Deuteronomy 21:18-21: If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. They shall say to the elders of his town, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard". Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death. So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid.

Do you have a stubborn or rebellious son? Take him out to be stoned to death. [This passage suggests that it's not just talking about your typical pain-in-the-ass teenager or autistic child. It's also talking about adult sons who never really grow up. Let's face it, guys, this passage has us all covered.]

6- 1 Timothy 6:1: Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed.

Titus 2:9-10: Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back, not to pilfer, but to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior.

Ephesians 6:5: Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ.

1 Peter 2:18: Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh.

You would support slavery. It is entirely possible that the Civil War with all its devastation and death might have been avoided had the Bible not taught that slavery was god-ordained. If you research slavery and Christianity and read the sermons that were given in the 1850s, both North and South, you will find that a majority are most erudite, well-written, and eloquent in their defense of slavery.

God and the Bible enter all the arguments, all the sermons, all the editorials of the time in support of slavery. The Bible tells how to buy and sell people, and that slaves are to obey their masters.

Abolitionist Theodore Parker once said that if "the whole American church had dropped through the continent and disappeared altogether, the anti-slavery cause would have been further on . . ."

According to Genesis 9, the biblical deity first ordained slavery because of the behavior of Noah's son Ham who committed the apparently unpardonable sin of observing his drunken father's nakedness. God punished Ham, with typical biblical justice, by condemning Ham's son Canaan to be "a servant of servants". In some complex rules for slavery in Exodus, a father is allowed to sell his children, and a slave is referred to as his owner's "money".

No wonder the slaveholders brandished their Bibles.

In the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, Paul sends the slave Onesimus back to a servitude from which he had fled. As for Jesus, he left the laws of slavery exactly as he found them, and his "terrible parables" are filled with references to slaves and masters, none of which denigrates slavery in any way. Blacks who say they "love" the Bible truly revere the chains that used to bind them.

7- Matthew 5:29-30: If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand

causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

Has your hand ever offended you? Has your eye offended you? If you apply the teachings of the New Testament you would chop off that hand and gouge out that eye. A few people still do this in the US today. Some deluded person "gets religion", which means being overcome with guilt and fear, studies the Bible, and then cuts off a hand or foot or gouges out any eye, following the teachings of Jesus.

8- 1 Timothy 2:11-14: Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; 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.

Following the teachings of both the Old and the New Testaments, you must believe in and practice sexism. The gods of the Bible are sexist gods. In the US today the Equal Rights Amendment would be the law of the land were it not for the Bible believers. They made the difference in keeping those last states from ratification.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who worked all of her adult life for women's right to vote, said most succinctly: "The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection she was to play the role of a dependent on man's bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire.

9- Psalms 2:8-9: Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

In one portion of one psalm the Bible and its god are mandating slavery, imperialism, the occupation of others' lands, mass murder and mayhem.

Hayyim ben Yehoshua

The Myth of the Historical Jesus

The First Epistle of Paul to Timothy warns against the Marcionist work known as the Antithesis. Marcion was expelled from the Church of Rome in c 144 CE, and the First Epistle of Paul to Timothy was written shortly afterwards. Thus we again have a clear case of pseudoePIGRAPHY.

We are left with the conclusion that all the Pauline epistles are pseudepigraphic. (The semi-mythical Paul was supposed to have died during the persecutions instigated by Nero in c 64 CE.) Some of the Pauline epistles appear to have been altered and edited numerous times before reaching their modern forms. We may thus conclude that they provide no historical evidence of Jesus.

The style of language used in Mark shows that it was written (probably in Rome) by a Roman convert to Christianity whose first language was Latin and not Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic.

The New Testament story confuses so many historical periods that there is no way of reconciling it with history. The traditional year of Jesus' birth is 1 CE. Jesus was supposed to be not more than two years old when Herod ordered the slaughter of the innocents. However, Herod died before 12 April 4 BCE. This has led some Christians to redate the birth of Jesus to 6-4 BCE. However, Jesus was also supposed to have been born during the census of Quirinius. This census took place after Archelaus was deposed in 6 CE, ten years after Herod's death. Jesus was supposed to have been baptized by John soon after John had started baptizing and preaching in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias, ie, 28-29 CE, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, ie, 26-36 CE. According to the New Testament, this also happened when Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene and Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. But Lysanias ruled Abilene from c 40 BCE until he was executed in 36 BCE by Mark Antony, about 60 years before the date for Tiberias and about 30 years before the supposed birth of Jesus! Also, there were never

two joint high priests; in particular, Annas was not a joint high priest with Caiaphas. Annas was removed from the office of high priest in 15 CE after holding office for some nine years. Caiaphas only became high priest in c 18 CE, about three years after Annas. Many of these chronological absurdities seem to be based on misreadings and misunderstandings of Josephus' book, Jewish Antiquities, which was used as reference by the author of Luke and Acts.

The story of Jesus' trial is highly suspicious. It clearly tries to placate the Romans while defaming the Jews. The historical Pontius Pilate was arrogant and despotic. He hated the Jews and never delegated any authority to them. However, in Christian mythology, he is portrayed as a concerned ruler who distanced himself from the accusations against Jesus and who was coerced into obeying the demands of the Jews. According to Christian mythology, every Passover the Jews would ask Pilate to free any one criminal they chose. This is, of course, a blatant lie. Jews never had a custom of freeing guilty criminals at Passover or any other time of the year. According to the myth, Pilate gave the Jews the choice of freeing Jesus the Christ or a murderer named Jesus Barabbas. The Jews are alleged to have enthusiastically chosen Jesus Barabbas. This story is a vicious antisemitic lie, one of many such lies found in the New Testament.

Dr E A Wallis Budge

In Osiris the Christian Egyptians found the prototype of Christ, and in the pictures and statues of Isis suckling her son Horus, they perceived the prototype of the Virgin Mary and her child. Never did Christianity find elsewhere in the world a people whose minds were so thoroughly well prepared to receive its doctrines as the Egyptians.

Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life

The Christian Trinity ousted the old triads of gods. Osiris and Horus were represented by our Lord Jesus Christ, Isis by the Virgin Mary, Set the god of evil by Diabolus (Satan), the various Companies of the Gods by the Archangels, and so on.

Egyptian Tales and Romances

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At the last, when Osiris' cult disappeared before the religion of the Man Christ, the Egyptians who embraced Christianity found that the moral system of the old cult and that of the new religion were so similar, and the promises of resurrection and immortality in each so much alike, that they transferred their allegiance from Osiris to Jesus of Nazareth without difficulty. Moreover, Isis and the child Horus were straightway identified with Mary the Virgin and her Son, and in the apocryphal literature of the first few centuries which followed the evangelization of Egypt, several of the legends about Isis and her sorrowful wanderings were made to centre round the Mother of Christ. Certain of the attributes of the sister goddesses of Isis were also ascribed to her [Mary], and, like the goddess Neth of Sais, she [Mary] was declared to possess perpetual virginity. Certain of the Egyptian Christian Fathers gave to the Virgin the title "Theotokos", or "Mother of God", forgetting, apparently, that it was an exact translation of neter mut, a very old and common title of Isis.

The Gods of Egypt

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It has been well said that the Egyptians were better prepared to receive and accept Christianity than any of the nations round about them. For thousands of years before St Mark came to Alexandria to preach the Gospel of his Master Christ, the Egyptians believed in Osiris the Man-god who raised himself from the dead. He was held to possess the power of bestowing immortality upon his followers because he had triumphed over Death, and had vanquished the Powers of Darkness. He was the Judge of souls and the supreme lord of the Judgment of the Dead; he was all-wise, all-knowing, all-just, and his decrees were final and absolute. No man could hope to dwell with him in his kingdom unless he had lived a life of

moral excellence upon earth, and the only passports to his favour were truth-speaking, honest intent, and the observation of the commands of the Law (Maat), coupled with charity, alms-giving, and humane actions.

Legends of Our Lady Mary

Albert Churchward

The Origin and Evolution of Religion

We see in the ancient Catholic churches, over the main altar, an equilateral triangle, and within it an eye. The addition of the eye to the triangle originated in Egypt -- "the all seeing eye of Osiris".

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Such mysteries as the Trinity; the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth; the Transfiguration on the Mount; the Passion, Death, Burial, Resurrection, and Ascension; Transubstantiation; and Baptismal Regeneration were all extant in the mysteries of Amenta with Horus or Iu-em-Hotep as the Egyptian Jesus.

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There was never any one Great Deluge as in the biblical rendering. At least ten Great Deluges have taken place at each glacial epoch, when the snow and ice have melted. There was also a great inundation once a year -- when the Nile came down in flood.

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Only one mention of the people of Israel occurs by name on all the monuments of Egypt. There is no possibility of identifying this with the Biblical Israelites. The chief teachers have always insisted on the allegorical nature of the Pentateuch. Thus it is seen that biblical history has been mainly derived from misappropriated and misinterpreted wisdom of Egypt contained in their mythological and eschatological representation. Traditions of the Exodus are found in various parts of the world and amongst people of different states of evolution, and these traditions can be explained by the Kamite (Egyptian) rendering only.

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The Jews strictly are of the Tribe, or Totemic Clan, of Judah. The Israelites were not Jews, although some Jews may be Israelites. Moses and his followers have been termed Israelites, but there is no evidence that the Israelites were ever in Egypt except once when they made a raid, and were driven back with great slaughter. The Israelites, a mythological name, were a number of Totemic Tribes who originally left Egypt and went to the East during the Stellar Cult.

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It is a Christian belief that life and immortality were brought to light, and death, the last enemy, was destroyed by a personal Jesus only 2000 years ago. The very same revelation had been accredited to Horus, the anointed, at least 3000 years before. Horus, as the impersonal and ideal revealer, was the Messiah in the astronomical mythology and the Son of God in the eschatology. The doctrine of immortality is so ancient in Egypt that the "Book of Vivifying the Soul Forever" was not only extant in the time of the First Dynasty but was then so old that the true tradition of interpretation was at that time already lost.

Would he not have been drawn to the Gethsemane garden, where Jesus was reported to have passed through the horror and the self-doubts that Paul himself had known? Would he not have gloried in standing before the empty tomb, the guarantee of his own resurrection? Is there indeed, in this wide land so recently filled with the presence of the Son of God, any holy place at all, any spot of ground where that presence still lingers, hallowed by the step, touch, or word of Jesus of Nazareth? Neither Paul nor any other first century letter writer breathes a whisper of any such thing.

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Within a handful of years of Jesus' supposed death, we find Christian communities all over the eastern Mediterranean, their founders unknown. Paul could not possibly account for all the Christian centres across the Empire; many were in existence before he got there. A form of Christian faith later declared heretical, Gnosticism, clearly preceded the establishment of orthodox beliefs and churches in whole areas like northern Syria and Egypt. The sheer variety of Christian expression and competitiveness in the first century, as revealed in documents both inside the NT and out, is inexplicable if it all proceeded from a single missionary movement beginning from a single source. Paul meets rivals at every turn who are interfering with his work, whose views he is trying to combat. The "false apostles" he rails against in 2 Corinthians 10 and 11 are "proclaiming another Jesus", and they are certainly not from Peter's group. Where do they all come from and where do they get their ideas? The answer seems inevitable: Christianity was born in a thousand places, in the broad fertile soil of Hellenistic Judaism. It sprang up in many independent communities and sects, expressing itself in a great variety of doctrines.

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If this man Jesus had had the explosive effect on his followers that is said of him, and on the thousands of believers who responded so readily to the message about him, such a man would have had to blaze in the firmament of his time. That impact would have been based on the force of his personality, on the unique things he said and did. There is no other way. And yet the picture we see

Earl Doherty

The Jesus Puzzle: Was There No Historical Jesus?

In all the Christian writers of the first century, in all the devotion they display about Christ and the new faith, not one of them ever expresses the slightest desire to see the birthplace of Jesus, to visit Nazareth his home town, the sites of his preaching, the upper room where he held his Last Supper, the tomb where he was buried and rose from the dead. These places are never mentioned! Most of all, there is not a hint of pilgrimage to Calvary itself, where humanity's salvation was consummated. How could such a place not have been turned into a shrine? Is it conceivable that Paul would not have wanted to run to the hill of Calvary, to prostrate himself on the sacred ground that bore the blood of his slain Lord? Surely he would have shared such an intense emotional experience with his readers!

immediately after Jesus' death, and for the next two generations in every extant document, flatly contradicts this. The blazing star immediately drops out of sight. No contemporary historian, philosopher or popular writer records him. There is no sign of any tradition or phenomenon associated with him. For over half a century Christian writers themselves totally ignore his life and ministry. Not a saying is quoted. Not a miracle is marvelled at. No aspect of his human personality, anchored within any biographical setting, is ever referred to. The details of his life, the places of his career: they raise no interest in any of his believers. This is an eclipse that does not even grant us a trace of a corona!

If, on the other hand, Jesus was simply an ordinary human man, an unassuming (if somewhat charismatic) Jewish preacher, who really said little of what has been imputed to him, who performed no real miracles, and who of course did not rise from the dead -- all of which might explain why he attracted no great attention and could have his life ignored as unimportant by his later followers -- what, then, is the explanation for how such a life and personality could have given rise to the vast range of response the scholars postulate, to the cosmic theology about him, to the conviction that he had risen from the dead, to the unstoppable movement which early Christianity seems to have been? This is an unsolvable dilemma.

Eusebius

History of the Church

Up to the [alleged] persecution under the Emperor Decius (250-51) there had been no persecution of Christians ordered by the emperor on an imperial scale.

[Eusebius was a Roman historian, and Bishop of Caesaria]

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When my fellow-Christians invited me to write letters to them I did so. These the devil's apostles have filled with tares, taking away some things and adding others. Small wonder then if some have dared to tamper even with the word of the Lord

Himself, when they have conspired to mutilate my own humble efforts.

[Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, reported by Eusebius]

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But increasing freedom transformed our character to arrogance and sloth; we began envying and abusing each other, cutting our own throats, as occasion offered, with weapons of sharp-edged words; rulers hurled themselves at rulers and laymen waged party fights against laymen, and unspeakable hypocrisy and dissimulation were carried to the limit of wickedness. Those of us who were supposed to be pastors cast off the restraining influence of the fear of God and quarreled heatedly with each other, engaged solely in swelling the disputes, threats, envy, and mutual hostility and hate, frantically demanding the despotic power they coveted.

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Because of His power to work miracles the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ became in every land the subject of excited talk and attracted a vast number of people in foreign lands very remote from Judea.

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Some of our predecessors rejected the book of Revelation and pulled it entirely to pieces, criticizing it chapter by chapter, pronouncing it unintelligible and illogical, and the title false. They say it is not John's and is not a revelation at all, since it is heavily veiled by its thick curtain of incomprehensibility; so far from being one of the apostles, the author of the book was not even one of the saints, or a member of the Church, but Cerinthus the founder of the sect called Cerinthian after him. [The words of Dionysius, (c 200-265), saint and head of the Alexandrian school after Origen.]

Godfrey Higgins, Esq

Anacalypsis

The fact of the names of God being disguised in all the [Old Testament] translations tends to prove that no dependence can be placed on any of them. The fact shows very clearly the temper or state of mind with which the translators have undertaken their task. God is called by several names. How is the reader of a translation to discover this, if he find them all rendered by one name? He is evidently deceived. It is no justification of a translator to say it is of little consequence.

Perhaps we do not find in history any doctrine which has been more pernicious than that of Original Sin. It is now demoralizing Britain. It caused all the human sacrifices in ancient times, and actually converted the Jews into a nation of cannibals, as Lord Kingsborough has proved that they were.

It is a striking circumstance that the gifts brought by the magi -- gold, frankincense and myrrh -- were what were always offered by the Arabian maji to the sun.

The presence of heathen devices and crosses on the same coin are not unusual, as Christians in those early times were for the most part semi-pagans. This is diametrically opposed to all the doctrines of the Protestants about the early purity of the religion of Christ, and its subsequent corruption by the Romists. In fact, it is mere nonsense, for there can be no doubt that the cross was one of the most common of the gentile symbols, and was adopted by the Christians (like all their other rites and ceremonies) from the gentiles.

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The followers of Krishna shouted "Jeye" or "ieue" during celebrations. This "ieue" is the same as both YHWH and "Jesus", as admitted by Clement of Alexandria (153-214), who noted that "the Savior" had been represented by the letters "IE", the same

designation found applied to Apollo on his temple at Delphi. The "Savior", of course, was not a carnalized, historical person but a spiritual construct that was known to many mystery schools and sects, which could thus be termed "salvation cultists".

Notwithstanding the strenuous exertions of the priests, for the last two thousand years, to eradicate every trace of the means by which their various doctrines, rites, and ceremonies have been established; yet they have not entirely succeeded.

Gerald Massey

Ancient Egypt: Light of the World, The Egyptian Book of the Dead, The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ, and Gnostic and Historic Christianity

Horus was the son of Seb, his father on earth. Jesus is the son of Joseph, the father on earth. Horus was with his mother the Virgin until twelve years old, when he transformed into the beloved son of God as the only-begotten of the father in heaven. Jesus remained with his mother the Virgin up to the age of twelve years, when he left her to be about his father's business. From twelve to thirty years of age there is no record in the life of Horus. From twelve to thirty years of age there is no record in the life of Jesus. Horus at thirty years of age became adult in his baptism by Anup. Jesus at thirty years of age was made a man of in his baptism by John the Baptist.

The four brothers of Horus equal the four brothers of Jesus. Amsta, Hapi, Tuamutef, Kabhsenuf equal James, Joseph, Simon, Judas.

It can be proved how passage after passage has been added to the earlier [Marcion] gospel, in the course of manufacturing the later history.

The Jewish writers altogether deny the identity of the Talmudic Jehoshua and the Jesus of the gospels. The Jews know nothing of Jesus as the Christ of the gospels.

Christianity began as Gnosticism, refaced with falsehoods concerning a series of facts alleged to have been historical, but which are demonstrably mythical. By which I do not mean mythical as exaggerations or perversions of historic truth, but belonging to the pre-extant Mythos. It is obvious that the Roman Church remained Gnostic at the beginning of the second century, and for some time afterwards. Marcion, the great Gnostic, did not separate from it until about the year 136 CE. Tatian did not break with it until long after that. In each case the cause of quarrel was the same. They left the Church that was setting up the fraud of Historic Christianity. They left it as Gnostic Christians, who were anathematized as heretics, because they rejected the Christ made flesh and the new foundations of religion in a spurious Jewish history.

The Synoptics say that Jesus was crucified on the 15th of the month of Nisan. John affirms that it was on the 14th of the month. The crucifixion (or crossing) was, and still is, determined by the full moon of Easter. This in the lunar reckoning, would be on the 14th in a month of twenty-eight days; in the solar month of thirty days it was reckoned to occur on the 15th of the month. Both unite, and the rift closes in proving the Crucifixion to have been astronomical, just as it was in Egypt, where the two dates can be identified.

It must be admitted, to the honour and glory of the Christian deity, that a god of eternal torment is an ideal distinctly Christian.

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The "sayings" were common property in the mysteries ages before they were ever written down. The "logia" in the 25th chapter of Matthew reproduce not only the sayings, but also the scenery of the Last Judgment in the Great Hall of

Justice, represented in the [Egyptian] Book of the Dead.

These are amongst the "sayings" in the Book of the Nazarenes. "Blessed are the peacemakers, the just, and faithful". "Feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked". "When thou makest a gift, seek no witness whereof, to mar they bounty. Let thy right hand be ignorant of the gifts of the left". Such were common to all the Gnostic Scriptures, going back to the Egyptian.

The sayings of the Lord were pre-historic, as the sayings of David (who was an earlier Christ), the sayings of Horus the Lord, of Elija the Lord, of Mana the Lord, of Christ the Lord, as the divine directions conveyed by the ancient teachings. As the "Sayings of the Lord" they were collected in Aramaic to become the nuclei of the earliest Christian gospel according to Matthew. So says Papias. At a later date they were put forth as the original revelation of a personal teacher, and were made the foundation of the historical fiction concocted in the four gospels that were canonized at last.

No matter who the plagiarist may be, the teaching now held to be divine was drawn from older human sources, and palmed off under false pretenses. Nothing new remained to be inculcated by the Gospel of the new teacher, who is merely made to repeat the old sayings with a pretentious air of supernatural authority; the result being that the true sayings of old are, of necessity, conveyed to later times in a delusive manner. The most important proclamations assigned to Jesus turned out to be false. The kingdom of God was not at hand; the world was not nearing its end; the catastrophe foretold never occurred; the second coming was no more actual than the first; the lost sheep of Israel are not yet saved.

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It [the book of Revelation] is expressed in terms of creative phenomena; its hero is not Jesus but the Sun of the Universe; its heroine is the Moon; and all its other characters are planets, stars, and constellations; while its stage-setting comprises the sky, the earth, the rivers, and the sea.

In some of the ancient Egyptian temples the Christian iconoclasts, (when tired of hacking and hewing at the symbolic figures incised in the chambers of imagery, and defacing the most prominent features of the monuments), found they could not dig out the hieroglyphics, and took to covering them over with plaster; and this plaster, intended to hide the meaning and stop the mouth of the stone word, has served to preserve the ancient writings as fresh in hue and sharp in outline as when they were first cut and colored. In a similar manner the temple of ancient religion was invaded and possession gradually gained by connivance of Roman power; and that enduring fortress, not built but quarried out of solid rock, was stuccoed all over the front and made white awhile with its look of brand-newness, and reopened under the sign of another name -- that of the carnalized Christ.

It can be proved that our Christology is mummified mythology, and legendary lore, which have been palmed off upon us in the Old Testament and the New, as divine revelation uttered by the very voice of God. We have the same conversion of myth into history in the New Testament that there is in the Old -- the one being effected in a supposed fulfillment of the other! Mythos and history have changed places once, and we have to change them again before we can understand their right relationship, or real significance.

The picture of the New Beginning commonly presented is Rembrandt-like in tone. The whole world around Judea lay in the shadow of outer darkness, when suddenly there was a great light seen at the centre of all, and the face of the startled universe was illuminated by an apparition of the child-Christ lying in the lap of Mary. Such was the dawn of Christianity, in which the Light of the World had come to it at last! That explanation is beautifully simple for the simple-minded; but the picture is entirely false.

Charles Waite

History of the Christian Religion to the Year Two Hundred

No one of the four gospels is mentioned in any other part of the New Testament. No work of art of any kind has ever been discovered, no painting, or engraving, no sculpture, or other relic of antiquity, which may be looked upon as furnishing additional evidence of the existence of those gospels, and which was executed earlier than the latter part of the second century. Even the exploration of the Christian catacombs failed to bring to light any evidence of that character. The four gospels were written in Greek, and there was no translation of them into other languages earlier than the third century.

Nearly everything written concerning the gospels to the year 325, and all the copies of the gospels themselves to the same period, are lost or destroyed.

Not only the most unblushing falsehoods, but literary forgeries of the vilest character, darken the pages of Eusebius' apologetic and historical writings.

[Eusebius was a Roman historian, Bishop of Caesaria, Christian apologist.]

The first New Testament that ever appeared was compiled and published by Marcion. It was in the Greek language. It consisted of "The Gospel" and "The Apostolicon". No Acts, no Revelation, and but one gospel. The Apostolicon comprised ten of Paul's epistles, as follows: Galatians; 1st and 2nd Corinthians; Romans, except the 15th and 16th chapters; 1st and 2nd Thessalonians; Ephesians; Colossians; Philemon; and Philippians, arranged in the order as here named. This canon of the New Testament was prepared and published shortly after his arrival in Rome, probably about 145CE. Marcion's gospel resembles the Gospel of Luke, but is much shorter.

Of the 150,000 variant readings which Griesbach found in the manuscripts of the New Testament, probably 149,500 were additions and interpolations.

It is plain that the Acts of the Apostles was written in the interest of the Roman Catholic Church, and in support of the tradition that the Church of Rome was founded by the joint labors of Peter and Paul.

The Apocalypse, or Revelation, ascribed to John, seems to have been one of many productions of the kind which appeared early in the second century. It is similar to the Revelation of Cerinthus, and may have emanated from the same source.

Brainwashing

Is there such a thing as brainwashing? Is the way in which cults recruit and indoctrinate their members an example of such mind control?

In his book on mind control and ego destruction, Robert J Lifton lists eight elements that he found to be intrinsic to the complete involuntary conversion of a person to a new and absolute philosophy, a process he calls totalism. They are:

1- Milieu Control: The purposeful limitation of all forms of communication with the outside world, sleep deprivation, a change in diet, control over who one can see and talk to.

2- Mystical manipulation: Teaching that the control group has a special (divine) purpose and that the subject has been chosen to play a special role in fulfilling this purpose.

3- Need for purity: Convincing the subject of his former impurity (before joining the control group) and the necessity of becoming pure or perfect as defined by the group.

4- Confession: Getting the subject to let down barriers and openly discuss innermost fears and anxieties.

5- Sacred science: Convincing the subject that the control group's beliefs are the only logical system of belief and therefore must be accepted and obeyed.

6- Loading the language: Creating a new vocabulary, by creating new words with special meanings understood only by members of the group, or by giving new and special meanings to familiar words and phrases.

7- Doctrine over persons: Convincing the subject that the group and its doctrine take precedence over any individual in the group or any other teaching from outside it.

8- Dispensing of existence: Teaching the subject that all those who disagree with the philosophy of the control group are doomed.

Prophetic Prestidigitation

Any challenge to the integrity of the Bible will very likely draw this familiar prophecy-fulfillment response: "If the Bible is not inspired of God, how do you explain all of the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled"? The answer is simple. The so-called prophecy fulfillments that the New Testament writers claimed in the person and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth were prophecy fulfillments only in the fertile imagination of the writers. They became prophecy fulfillments only through the distortions and misapplications of the original Old Testament (OT) statements.

Another aspect of the prophecy-fulfillment argument involves New Testament (NT) claims of prophecy fulfillment for which no OT sources can be found. One example concerns the very foundation of Christianity. On the night of his alleged resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day". (Luke 24:46) The Apostle Paul agreed with this claim that the scriptures had referred to a third-day resurrection of the messiah: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on

the third day according to the scriptures". (1 Cor 15:4-5)

Two NT writers, then, claimed that the scriptures had spoken of a resurrection of the messiah on the third day. The problem is that no one can cite a single OT scripture that mentions a third-day resurrection. As a matter of fact, no one can even cite an OT scripture that clearly and undeniably refers to a resurrection of the messiah, period.

If NT writers were often wrong when they referred to prophetic statements that cannot be found in the OT, how can we know they were right when they claimed fulfillment of statements that can be found?

Early Christians were Prosecuted, Not Persecuted

Much is made of the fact that Christians were supposed to have been severely persecuted just for worshipping Jesus, and for no other reason, by Romans during the first centuries CE. Although the degree to which Christians were actually persecuted by pagans has been wildly exaggerated, the truth is, early Christians did indeed seem to have evoked considerably more than their share of scorn and antagonism from pagan authorities. This is somewhat baffling because, as has often been pointed out, the official policy of the Roman Empire, both in principle and in practice, was one of permitting near total religious freedom. This extended even to the point of allowing many practices that even modern western nations would never permit in the name of religious freedom. But once you recognize that claiming you were about to reveal the secrets of the Son of God Jesus to the uninitiated public was a death penalty offense, forbidden under the laws prohibiting people from profaning or betraying the mysteries, you begin to at least partially understand why the pagan legal officials might have tended to take for granted that it was their duty to suppress Christian preachers. To them, certain aspects of Christian preaching represented blatant criminal activities. In the mind of the pagans, such sanctions against Christians were reasonable punishments for very definite, obvious and specific violations of the law,

not unwarranted persecutions of people who were innocently worshipping God in their own way.

Greg Garrett, *The Other Jesus*

Sol Invictus

Many peoples have worshipped the powers of the natural world. Resplendent among these is the Sun. To a philosopher such as Plato, the Sun symbolized the ultimate. It gave the power of sight, which symbolized the power of insight. The Sun is light and fire, and many mystics all over the world have spoken of their highest experience in terms of light.

But if the Sun brings light and warmth, it also brings scorching heat and destruction. Its rays are often called arrows. Light and darkness are at war with one another. So religions focusing on the Sun have often tended to militarism. Two examples will suffice.

Zoroastrianism, whose origins are now thought to go back to the second millennium BCE, became the creed of the militant Achaemenid dynasty in Persia in the sixth century. It centered on the struggle between the forces of Order and Chaos, Light and Darkness, and the Sun was one of the powers fighting on the side of Order and Light.

A second example comes from the period when, after a century of largely untroubled peace, the Roman Empire experienced a century of wars and disasters. In their distress, they looked for a new divine champion, and went to the Sun, the Unconquered Sun, "Sol Invictus". In 274 CE, the emperor Aurelian actually adopted the Sun as the Supreme God of the Roman Empire.

Constantine's family were worshippers of the Unconquered Sun. When he was marching on Rome, he had his famous vision of a Cross superimposed on the Sun. It came from his family god. Constantine was in fact a syncretist. His statue in Constantinople bore the rayed crown of the Sun god, made, as he believed, from the nails of Christ's Cross. His god was a god of war, not peace.

-- From *The Portable World Bible*, Viking Press, 1939

Meet Jesus' Uncle Zoro

Zarathushtra is the Iranian word for Zoroaster, who founded a religion in ancient Persia. It was he who roused in mankind the need for the hatred of unworthy things -- thereby discovering the devil and, incidentally, paradise, the last judgment, and the resurrection of the dead. Mithraism is an off-shoot, and Christianity stole some of the popular Zoroastrian beliefs.

In spite of crushing military and naval defeats, with the resulting decline of the Persian Empire, and the eventual near-extinction of Zoroastrianism, so great was this religion's vitality and so appealing to the human heart were many of its conceptions and precepts that much of Zarathushtra's creed lives on in the religions of Christianity and Judaism.

Up to the time of the exile, the source of both good and evil in the religion of the Israelites was thought to be the God Jehovah. But after the exile, which is to say after the influence of Zarathushtra's monotheistic doctrine began to be felt, the Old Testament writers recorded the doctrine that Jehovah was the one God of the universe and a God of pure righteousness, while Satan was charged with all evil creations. It is probable that Satan -- or the devil of later Judaism and Christianity -- is none other than Angra Mainyu, the arch daeva of Zoroastrianism.

The elaborate angelology and demonology of later Judaism, the idea of a divine judgment and a final resurrection, and a future life in a region which may be definitely described -- all seem to have come from the doctrines of Zarathushtra, though there is no definite proof of this. Almost certainly the Magi who are said to have visited Jesus in the manger were Zoroastrian priests, and Christ's word "paradise" was taken from the Persian "pairidaeza".

While Zoroastrianism and Christianity both state the necessity of faith and works, the emphasis in Christianity is on faith, in Zoroastrianism on works.

When Alexander the Great conquered Persia, and Greek cities were established there, the decline of Zoroastrianism began. Under the Mohammedans the decline continued until today there are scarcely ten thousand followers of Zarathushtra in the land of his birth.

-- From the *World Bible*, edited by Robert O Ballou

If You Believe in Christianity, You Believe in Mithraism

Practically every religious leader or hero has said exactly the same thing. Zoroaster used exactly the same words [attributed to Jesus], saying, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Light." The Buddha used the same language, as did Lao Tzu of Taoism. The vast majority of the mythological formulas attached to Jesus were borrowed from Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Egypt, Babylon, and the Greek Mystery religions.

Christian mythology is quite obviously saturated with Mithraism. The followers of Mithras believed that there would be a "day of judgment" when non-believers would perish and believers would live in a heaven or "paradise" (a Persian word) forever and ever. All of these mythological formulas were absorbed centuries later by the Christian cult into their rituals. Paul, who never even knew Jesus, took all of these mythological themes and attached them to Jesus, building his Christ mythology. He took Jesus out of Judaism and borrowed the Mithraic Sun-day instead of the Hebrew Sabbath. All of the Mithraic holy days were used to fill in this mythological construct: Christmas, Easter, Lent, and the spring resurrection festival. The Christian "Mass" was, and is, basically the old sacrament of the Mithraic "taurobolia" (a symbol of a divine sacrifice and of the saving effect of blood.)

-- William Edelen