Nature, Violence, Consciousness, Sexuality and World Religion: A Roadmap
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Author’s Introduction

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

I am not saying this as a materialist who has no understanding of the higher sensibilities leading to spiritual and visionary experience. In addition to being a scientist with a deep respect for the natural universe and the pursuit of knowledge, I have accumulated a rich diversity of numinous experience to develop my own acquaintance with the mysterium tremendum. I have made pilgrimages to the sources of the world's sacred power plants and taken the living sacraments with traditional practitioners. I have wandered India as a sadhu and taken initiations with high lamas. I have made a vigil to Jerusalem in the millennium to perform rites of passage for the sacred reunion of woman and man in culminating the apocalyptic epoch in reflowering the Tree of Life. I am thus in a position to affirm the source nature of mystical experience at first hand. It is this direct experience of numinous reality that is at the very root of the religious impulse and at the very source in the emergence of new religious traditions. To experience it directly is a human right and one that we should all safeguard as tenaciously as our democratic human rights. It is not a question of freedom of belief, but the freedom to seek the truth of our inner nature, in first hand formative visionary experiences, by any means, whether by meditation, privation or the consumption of visionary species and substances, rather than being bound by the second and third hand doctrines and morally punitive imperatives of prescriptive religion.
1: Religion and Violence: Jihad and Takfiri

For the last decade we have been witnessing a clash of the cultures involving violent asymmetric warfare, pitting superpowers with vast and sophisticated firing power against adversaries who will stop at nothing to wreak terror on innocent people, through suicidal attacks causing maximum human carnage, and outright brutality in premeditated genocidal slaughter - all in the name of the one true religion, whether it be the Sunni, the Shi'ite, or the Christian tradition. The Middle East is now embroiled in a genocidal conflict emerging from the Arab spring in which Sunni and Shiite factions are pursuing a brutal internecine confrontation. There have been genocidal attacks on Yazidis, Christians, Kurds and any populations standing in the path of a so-called caliphate, which at the same time is publicly beheading innocent parties to strike terror into all its opponents. Yet this so-called "Islamic State" is not just a terrorist monster but an actual manifestation of Islamic traditions that source back to the prophet himself. These source traditions contain founding elements of violence, from the invocation of jihad, or "holy war", leading to the right to genocide of whole communities, justified by the lethal accusation of takfiri, or apostasy, and the slaying of idolaters.

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

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

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

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

![Fig 3: “Purest” Islam](image)

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

Girls living under IS rule may legitimately be married from as young as nine. Their education should continue no later than the age of 15 and "most pure girls will be married by 16 or 17". Most women should lead a sedentary lifestyle within the confines of their homes (Women in the Islamic State: Manifesto and Case Study, al-Khanssaa Brigade's media wing).

The Brutality of Murder and Enslavement is a Central Intentional part of the Plan of the Caliphate:

"The brutality of beheading is intended, even delightful to God and His Prophet." (Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir in The Theology of Jihad, whose writings have provided religious cover for the most brutal excesses, for the killing of Shia as infidels, and their Sunni collaborators as apostates).

We need to massacre and to do just as has been done to Banu Qurayza, so we must adopt a ruthless policy in which hostages are brutally and graphically murdered unless our demands are met" (Abu Bakr Naji "The Management of Savagery" 2004 - referring to a Jewish tribe in seventh-century Arabia which reportedly met the same fate at the hands of early Muslims as the Yazidis of Sinjar did nearly 14 centuries later: the men were slaughtered, the women and children enslaved).

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

But those who reject Faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of Faith, - never will their repentance be accepted; (3:90)

Allah hath promised the Hypocrites men and women, and the rejecters, of Faith, the fire of Hell: Therein shall they dwell: Sufficient is it for them: for them is the curse of Allah, and an enduring punishment (9:68).

Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah - for them will We add Penalty to Penalty; for that they used to spread mischief (16:88).

slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush (9:5).
Ali burnt some people and this news reached Ibn 'Abbas, who said, "Had I been in his place I would not have burnt them, as the Prophet said, 'Don't punish (anybody) with Allah's Punishment.' No doubt, I would have killed them, for the Prophet said, 'If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him' (al-Bukhari 4:52:260).

Allah's Apostle said, "The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am His Apostle, cannot be shed except in three cases: In Qisas for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse and the one who reverts from Islam (apostate) and leaves the Muslims" (al-Bukhari 9:83:17).

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

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

but a greater (transgression) with Allah is to prevent mankind from following the way of Allah, to disbelieve in Him, to prevent access to the Ka'aba and to drive out its inhabitants, and Al-Fitnah is worse than killing (2:217).

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

Fig 3b: The IS 'Caliph' and his sex slave: US officials state that the enslaved American humanitarian aid worker Kayla Mueller, 26, abducted in Aleppo in 2013, was personally taken to be imprisoned and then repeatedly raped by IS group's top leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at the compound of IS oil-financier Abu Sayyaf, despite Mueller trying to reassure her family, that she was "completely unharmed + healthy (put on weight in fact); I have been treated w/ the utmost respect + kindness." before she was killed under disputed circumstances, in what IS claimed was a Jordanian air strike, but was murder by IS militants according to a Yazidi sex slave, days after White House Chief of Staff Dennis McDonough inadvertently blurted out Mueller's first name on ABC News: "Kayla's family knows how strongly the president feels about this and we will continue to work this" - hinting at a rescue attempt. Officials say they obtained the information from teenage Yazidi girls who were held hostage as sex slaves and found inside the compound at the time of a covert US operation which killed Sayyaf shortly after her death, as well as from interrogation of his wife, Umm who was taken into custody, accused of enslavement, and later controversially handed over to Kurdish forces in Irbil. Kayla had earlier stated: "Everything happens for a reason, and that nothing should be a regret, and that you're always learning about yourself through other people."
Islamic State summarily executed nearly 2,000 people in the six months to December 2014, most of them civilians. The sum total of civilians summarily executed by IS is estimated at 15,000.

Ivan Šimonović UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights says: "The atrocities committed systematically and intentionally by ISIL against the Yezidi community, may amount to an attempt to commit genocide. ISIL leaves Yezidis no option except to convert or die". Zeid bin Ra'ad, the incoming UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, declared that ISIL "is the antithesis of human rights. It kills, it tortures, it rapes, its idea of justice is to commit murder. It spares no one - not women, not children, nor the elderly, the sick or the wounded. No religion is safe, no ethnic group. It is a diabolical, potentially genocidal movement". The massacres, beheadings, rape and torture "reveal only what a Takfiri state would look like, should this movement actually try to govern in the future. It would be a harsh, mean-spirited house of blood, where no shade would be offered, nor shelter given to any non-Takfiri in their midst".

Fig 3c: Abubakar Shekau the leader of Boko Haram "Western education is forbidden" has declared allegiance to IS and abducted the girls of Chibok as slave brides for the warriors. Boko Haram has killed more than 17,000 people since 2009.

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

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

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

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

*Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down the sakina [tranquillity] on them and rewarded them with a speedy victory (48:18).*

It is by no means hard to appreciate that combining holy war with the death penalties for apostasy and for the infidel who doesn't convert, contradicts any claims of being a religion of a 'true god' with homicidal religious compulsion, consistent only with repression and genocide. But this use of the double jeopardy of *jihad* and *takfi* in the scripture to justify unrelenting killing is only the tip of the predatory iceberg. Religious wars have
been rumbling as long as cultures have used their religions to justify violence in the name of one civilization dominating another, and as religions have become more universal, in the name of violent utopian claims to the ultimate victory of the believers over the infidels of one religion or another. Furthermore it is not just war and genocide that is the result of religious conflict, but the violent control of women and human reproduction and of exploitative destruction of the planet and its living future, through belief in sterile religious paradigms, in which nature is debased in favour of a day of judgment involving hell fire and damnation, with only the true believers ascending into an imaginary eternal paradise full of unnatural and impossible futures.

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

2: African Eden to Semitic Fall - Founding Cultures to Burned Offerings and Genocide

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

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

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

One particular version (see Johnson et al “The Bushmen” and van der Post & Taylor's “Testament to the Bushmen”) has him making the world in very much the way we find in the biblical Genesis:

He created the earth with holes in it where water could collect and water, the sky and rain both the gentle 'female' rain and the fierce 'male' rain thunder and lightning, the sun, moon, stars and wind. He created all the plants that grow on the earth. He created the animals and painted their individual colours and markings, and gave them all names. Then came human beings, and he put life into them; and gave to them all the weapons and implements they now have, and he implanted in them the knowledge of how to take all these things for themselves. Thus their hunting and gathering way of life was ordained from the very beginning and ≠Gaolna ordained that when they died they should become spirits, //Gerais, who would live in the sky with him and serve him. He set the pattern of life for all things, each in accordance with its own rules.

Of course this is a story that, despite the very ancient origins of the San culture, has been recounted in modern times, so it may have some elements of cultural contamination, but the overall message is clear. When we hear ≠Gaolna painted the animals with their colours, we understand it metaphorically as a myth in the ‘dreamtime’, the visionary world beyond, not a literal instruction we depend on practically to survive. When they say ≠Gaolna created the earth with holes in it, this is just an allegorical description of the first act of the great play of life to help the people make sense of the world and feel in a meaningful relationship with it. Their cosmology includes trickster heroes, animistic forces and an after life in which their spirits become immortal. Although,
according to Bleek and Lloyd's 1911 "Specimens-Of-Bushman-Folklore", they have historically had severe moral punishments, including killing for stealing, this was a matter between tribal bands and not the deities. By contrast, their attitude to their founding deities is not one of fear and compulsive obedience, but of philosophical acceptance of their sometimes perfidious influences of life, and a refreshing cheeky sense of humour:

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

Fig 4: Above: Celebration of a girl's menarche Fulton's Cave, Tsolilo Hills. Lower inset: Trance dance.

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

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

While, in tribal bands such as the Bushmen, all participants are understood to be able to enter the visionary state through the trance dance, as societies moved from village to city a division ensued, in which the tribal shaman metamorphosed into the priest of an established religion with set doctrines and beliefs.

Such a religion has no place for the visionaries who provide the well spring of the spiritual quest, so the priesthood take control of the party line, exiling the prophets and seers, who are left crying in sack cloth and ashes, expelled to desert caves, or eliminated as dangerous defectors, as Jesus himself noted:

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

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

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

This social and political agenda is in turn made credible to the individual follower by a form of double think. Personal visionary experience is regarded as heresy and replaced with conforming rituals mediated by the priesthood. The followers are made morally vulnerable by their transparency to an all-seeing deity. You cannot see God but God can see you. The necessity of affirmative faith and belief, as integral to the religious quest, is reinforced over evidential support, and autonomous assessment by the individual, of the credibility and efficacy of the doctrine. A set of social principles is conveyed claiming unquestioning authority of the highest devotion. Membership within the fold is crafted to require fidelity and commitment under threat of punishment for defection, by anything from banishment to execution. Again these are not sacred but the characteristics of a parasitic cultural process.

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

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

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

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

Yet the Jews continued to practice animal forms of burned sacrifice in the temple, from the mythological time of the flood when after they reached dry land, Noah took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar - a partial
genocide of the very life he had saved, and the sweet savor God smelt softened his heart not to destroy all living things again. Neither was the Hebrew God who condemned even Moses his prophet to die before reaching the holy Land, any less reluctant to commit murder of other peoples. Although the ten commandments say "Do not kill", it is clear this applied only to the Jews, as the Lord commanded Moses, and in turn Joshua, to utterly destroy the cities of Hazor and Jericho and all who lived there.

This is spelt out in even more gratuitously violent detail in Deuteronomy, where God is alleged to have commanded that cities that you make war on which do not submit shall have the men all put to the sword and the women and children taken in slavery as spoils of war, just as IS is doing today:

   And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself: and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee (Deut 20:13).

The only exceptions are the lands where the Israelites were to settle where everyone was to be killed:

   But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them (Deut 20:16).

Likewise stoning women for adultery, which is still horrifically practiced in Islam, is derived from Deuteronomy:

   But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you (Deut 22:20).

We shall see that Deuteronomy is a text of suspicious origin discovered during a temple reconstruction hundreds of years after Moses, so these elements urgently need to be abrogated and cast out of the scripture.

Eventually we see animal sacrifice take human form again with Jesus as the Pesach lamb, accused of blasphemy and insurrection, closing the cycle of the lamb’s blood on the doorposts warding off God from killing the firstborn of the Israelites, but not the Egyptian children:

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

3: Houses of Blood: Evolution of a God acting in History

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

In the first chapter of Genesis, God is described as the dyadic ‘Elohim - male and female in their likeness - making the universe in six days in an idiosyncratic, but endearing, sequence, with the plants appearing fully fledged before the sun, allegedly some 4000 years ago. The term ‘Elohim - God in the male plural - bears a natural relationship with the older Canaanite pantheon of Ba’alim, regarded as the children of El and his consorts Anat and Atahirat. The Hebrew bible associates ‘Elohim with a verb in the singular implying God is one, but the reference to male and female clearly implies God has both masculine and feminine complements. Of course this is not the first idea of God historically because the date of writing of the priestly author is exilic or post-exilic 571-486 BC, long after the events of the mythical period in Genesis, but the origin of the ‘Elohim is ultimately ancient. The hieros gamos or “holy marriage” of the God and Goddess is an ancient motif leading to the concept of the ‘Elohim. The ultimate tragedy of Monotheism is that it did not just overthrow idols, or competing deities, it destroyed the partnership principle that is at the root of the passage of the generations.
The hieros gamos from 10,000 BC through Catal Huyuk 7500 BC to Inanna and Dumuzi in Sumeria 2500 BC represents conjugal fertility. Middle: Bottleneck in human Y-chromosome from 10,000 years ago with the spread of urban agricultural civilizations resulted from an ongoing sex ratio of 1 reproducing man for every 17 women - the extreme polygyny of male elite power with a few high status males controlling female reproductive choice. Below: The law codes of Sumerian Enmetena/Urukagina, Babylonian Hammurabi and the Assyrians each contain provisions for the repression of female power and reproductive choice. The first said "women speaking out of turn could have their teeth smashed by a brick", the second introduced the death penalty for adultery, and the third enforced veiling for women as well as far more violent punishments than the Babylonians.

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

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 
I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. …
Then I was by him, as one brought up with him:
and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him (8:22)

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

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

In the more archaic Eden scenario, that follows the Sabbatical creation, the tables are turned on the reunion. A lone and lonely figure Yahweh (YHWH) makes Adam out of dust and breathes life into him in a paradisiacal garden surrounded by four rivers. There is no hint he made the garden let alone the entire universe.

He later makes a woman, Eve, the mother of all living, out of Adam's rib, despite intimations in Jewish folklore that the first sexual partner of Adam was the ancient goddess Lillith, who flew up into the air like an owl when Adam tried to insist on the missionary position. When Eve seeks wisdom and mistakenly eats
the forbidden fruit of knowledge of dark and light, subtly equated with carnal knowledge, Yahweh curses woman, who becomes the devil's gateway, and through her misdeed, Adam as well, and drives the founding couple out into the wilderness with a flaming sword to suffer hard labour in the thistles and the travail and pain of childbirth.

Explaining mortality is a common theme in myth and folklore, but blaming it on the immortal sex is a fundamental violation of nature, a patriarchal rort to justify a woman having to be ruled over by her husband. It is a deceit not shared by other avowedly patriarchal warrior societies. In the Polynesian myth of Maui the tables are reversed. It is the hero's sexual misadventure that fails to conquer death. Neither is the female in the piece blamed for his predicament, but laughter at his preposterous venture:

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

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

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

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

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

The historical evidence from archaeology strongly suggests that the patriarchs were nomadic followers of the male Moon God. Abraham is said in the Bible to have made a journey from his birthplace, Ur of the Chaldees, to Harran. These were the Southern and Northern centers of worship of the ancient Moon God, Nannar or Sin. When Woolley excavated the Royal Tombs at Ur, he was surprised to find a 'ram in a thicket' echoing Abraham's sacrificial offer of Isaac and the 'scapegoat'. Several key names in Abraham's family, Terah (compare Yerah Moon God of Canaan), Laban, Sarah and Milcah are derived from worship of the Moon Deity. Benjaminites were nomads on the outskirts of Mari around 1760 BC who had specific associations with Harran. The names Abi-ram (Abraham) Yasmah-El (Ishmael) Yaqob-El (Jacob), a name also shared by a Hyksos chief and El-Laban (Laban) all appear at Mari.

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

From there we enter into the fulminations over various other
deities during the aftermath of the Exodus. While Moses is up the mountain for forty days, the people beseech Aaron and he makes a golden calf out of their earrings, so the plurality of their images in jewelry became one deity. But when Moses saw this, he threw his tablets bearing the Ten Commandments in anger, smashing them. When the Levites stood with him he ordered them to slaughter the defectors and three thousand are claimed to have died. Ba’alpeor or Lord of the Opening has been claimed by some to be a coprophilic shrine where defecation was the offering, but it has also been alleged to be Lord of the Cleft and to involve promiscuous fertility rites. When Midianite women are seen to be seducing Israelite men there, Phinehas runs a couple through with a javelin, turning away God’s anger, but according to Numbers, four thousand men were killed, ostensibly in the plague but Moses had ordered every one who had joined to Ba’alpeor to be killed. All this, despite the fact that Moses also worshipped the brazen serpent Nehustan. In a final jealous twist, when the people complained about the lack of water and food crops, Moses was himself cursed by Yahweh for hitting the rock at Merebah with Aaron’s staff and releasing the waters, rather than speaking to it in Yahweh’s honour in front of the people.

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

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

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

*Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods* (1 Kings 11:7).

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

*God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. … I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes* (Psalm 82).

Historical commentators point out here the difference between monolatrism - belief in one particular god in a culture in which many deities are worshipped and monotheism where there is only one god, and state that much of early Hebrew history consists of the former. Sometimes the host comprises the astral deities cursed by the prophets and conservative monarchs and at other times it is God and the host of angels, forming a militaristic royal court, where the other ‘deities’ have become subsidiary angelic figures without being exorcized.
On the one hand 2 Kings 17:16 notes the Heavenly Host is cursed so that Israel is lost to the Assyrians:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the time of Hezekiah, the pastoral worship of the tabernacle was repressed in favour of the central worship at the temple of Jerusalem. He also threw out the serpent Nehustan whom Moses had said was anointed for the task by God. We can thus see that Yahwist monarchs acted not only to forcibly repress fertility worship of the Ba’alim and Asherah but also to repress traditional regional Yahweh worship of the tribes. However fertility worship remained a major force in societies depending largely on agriculture and the fertility of the earth to feed their people. The sexual rites, cursed on every high hill and under every green tree by the Yahwists formed a continuing motif of catalyzing fertility and abundance through the sexual union of the god and goddess although also accompanied by themes of blood sacrifice. These practices continued in the wider cultural setting of Judea right up to the time of Jesus, when neighbouring Nabatea was at its cultural climax. So we find an ebb and flow. Mannaseh, who followed Hezekiah and was co-regent with him for the first ten years, undid Hezekiah’s conservative reforms and reinstituted freedom of religion, resulting in the return of the Asherah and Ba’alim to the temple.

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

Deuteronomy both recounts the Exodus and the life of Moses and its central core is the Law Code, which as we have noted prescribes the genocide of conquered males in warfare and enslavement of the women and children, the stoning for adultery of maidens caught without the tokens of virginity and other extreme punishments which, although they have no longer been followed in the Judeo-Christian world for two millennia, have continued in the Islamic world through Muhammad adopting literally these commandments even when Jews protested they were excessive. The Code of Hammurabi 1754 BC, which is the source of Deuteronomy’s “eye for an eye”, contained more mediating passages. It prescribed drowning for female adultery, but the husband remained free to forgive her. It ordained death for stealing and many other non-homicidal offences, but there is no provision for male genocide in war, although there are many provisions pertaining to slaves.

Most modern historians agree that Deuteronomy dates from the reign of Josiah, although elements of the Law Code would have been traditional laws and punishments and the book in its present form was compiled after the Exile. One interpretation of how this came about is that Yahweh-only worship became a tradition in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was transferred south to Judah, where Yahweh was conceived as the leader of many deities. Powerful landowners installed Josiah at the age of eight and issued in a series of reforms during his reign, partly as a reaction to the loss of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrians when the Northern Kingdom rebelled against the Assyrian yoke as vassals. Southern Isaiah and northern Hosea were prophetic contemporaries. Isaiah makes no mention of the Exodus, covenants with God, or disobedience to God's laws, but Hosea makes frequent reference to the Exodus, the wilderness wanderings, a covenant, the danger of foreign gods and the need to worship Yahweh alone suggesting a transfer from North to South.

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

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

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

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

Fig 10: Obelisk of Shalmaneser king of Assyria (828-814 BC) showing Jehu kissing his feet. This man who exterminated the seventy sons of Ahab, the forty-two sons of Ahaziah, a 'great multitude' of the followers of Ba'al, and had Jezebel thrown into the street from an upstairs window, trampled by horses and devoured by dogs did not protect Israel, but bowed to the Assyrian yoke. Likewise Josiah raped the sanctuaries and within two decades Israel was taken into exile in Babylon. Not a good track record for the efficacy in history of the Yahweh-only movement.
Again we have to understand that the god acting in history is really a nostalgic construction of exilic Yahwists, seeking to explain their predicament and justify their continued faith in following the practices of their religion under the yoke of the Babylonians. In fact there is no evidence that the Yahwist monarchs better kept the kingdoms of Israel and Judea safe than those who allowed freedom of worship. Jehu for example was extolled as a militant Yahwist but one finds a stele of him paying obeisance to the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser. In the Northern Kingdom there was both worship of Yahweh and the Ba'alim. Jeroboam for example did not want his people gravitating to the Jerusalem temple and built two temples at Bethel and Dan with golden bulls at the entrance to represent the national god. Neither was the more eclectic worship of the Northern Kingdom, which continued to worship diverse deities, the cause of its annexation by Assyria. In fact the Assyrians first arrived at the behest of the Judeans, so it is really a case of betrayal by the more Yahwistic kingdom.

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

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

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

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

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

It remains unclear how much Jesus was himself the author of this violent nexus of beliefs and events. Jesus, like the founders of many great religions, was a visionary genius. Many of his sayings, from the parables
to the golden rule, are deeply penetrating insights. Taken all-in-all his vision synthesized a cultural fusion of all the spiritual and apocalyptic components of the fermenting cultures of Israel and the wider fertility traditions of the Middle East. His Dionysian miracles, his financial support "out of their substance" by the women of Galilee, and his eventual anointing by a woman to his doom, attest to the fertility traditions of neighbouring Nabatea. His sayings in the Gospel of Thomas contradict many of the assumptions that he claimed to be the messiah who had to be sacrificed. In Matthew when he says "who am I?" Simon Peter answers "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", but in Thomas, Jesus replies "I am not your master, but you have drunk from the bubbling spring that I have measured out". Jesus has paradoxical insights about the nature of non-ordinary reality that go far deeper than the cliché of the miraculous messiah portrayed in the synoptics:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fig 12: Yaldabaoth is frequently called “the Lion-faced”, leontoeides, with the body of a serpent.

We are told also that the Demiurge is of a fiery nature, the words of Moses being applied to him, “the Lord our God is a burning and consuming fire”. In Pistis Sophia Yaldabaoth has already sunk from his high estate and resides in Chaos, where, with his forty-nine demons, he tortures wicked souls in boiling rivers of pitch, and with other punishments.
The unmitigated carnage of mass martyrdom, driven as much by the spirited insistence of the Christians themselves, as by the brutal excesses of emperors such as Nero, continued until the Roman emperor Constantine converted Christianity into another state religion - of the greatest empire of its day - thereby gaining all the trappings of militaristic power and corruption. Thus the inward violence implicit in the Christian doctrine stemming from the Crucifixion itself became turned into outward violence, firstly in religious war leading to the Crusades, and then to the Inquisition and witch hunts.

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

The Crusades were a diabolical episode in Christian history in which corrupt and violent elements wrought carnage, and their own ultimate downfall at the hands of a much more highly-principled Saladin. To give an idea of the severity of the killing, succeeding passages come from Susan Haskins' “Mary Magdalen Myth and Metaphor”, Steve Jones' “In the Blood: God, Genes and Destiny” and Elizabeth Hallam's “Chronicles of the Crusades”:

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

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

Fig 14: The altarpiece at Albi, commissioned as a warning to the Gnostics, who shed their clothing to resume the nakedness of innocence, undoing the original sin of the fig leaf, after they were brutally suppressed by the Catholics.
The Inquisition was an extension of the Crusades turned inward on the population of Europe for perceived heresy, brought back by travelers from the crusades to the Holy Land, who had made contact with lingering Gnostic remnants there. Anyone with beliefs deviating from a narrow Catholic doctrine, now corrupted by Popes who had become the most corrupt totalitarian leaders in Europe, found themselves facing annihilation. The authorities used their religious imperative to crush all dissent against the imposed social order, even though this dissent was itself sourced in what many of the adherents believed to be a truer religion, closer to Christianity’s own actual roots. Likewise Christian mystics such as Marguerite Porete who wrote "Mirror of the Simple Soul" became the first victim of the auto da fe in Paris, summarily burned at the stake, leaving only a small entourage around Meister Eckhardt, who probably died before his Inquisitional verdict was received, virtually the only exponents of the mystical inner tradition.

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

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

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

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

\[
\text{O mankind! Have fear of your Lord and fear that Day when no father shall avail his son nor a son his father. Surely the promise of Allah is true. Let not the life of this world deceive you, nor let the Deceiver (Satan) deceive you concerning Allah. Surely Allah Alone has the knowledge of the Hour (31:33).}
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Al-Llah (Allah), which simply means “God” is found on ancient inscriptions in Sinai, partnered with al-Lat, or “Goddess”, just as Yahweh was paired with Asherah, The continuity with Yahweh is reinforced throughout the Quran by the accounts of Abraham, Moses and successive prophets, all worshipping the same ‘true’ god;

Abraham said [to his father]: “Peace be upon you: I will pray to my Lord for your forgiveness, surely He is ever Kind to me. I am leaving you and those whom you invoke besides Allah: I will call upon my Lord and I am sure my prayers to my Lord will not be ignored." So when he left them and the deities whom they worshipped besides Allah, We granted him descendants like Isaac and Jacob, and We made each of them a Prophet (19:47).

Jesus is accepted as a prophet in a line extending from Abraham to Muhammad, and becomes the model of martyrdom:
Surely the likeness of Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam;
He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was (3:59).

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

And there is not one of the followers of the Book but most certainly believes in this before his death, and on the day of resurrection he (Isa) shall be a witness against them (4:159).

He (Isa) is surely a knowledge of the hour, ... And when Isa came with clear arguments he said: I have come to you indeed with wisdom, and that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in (43:61).

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

And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the apostle of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure. Nay! Allah took him up to Himself; and Allah is Mighty, Wise (4:157).

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

Those who say: “The Compassionate (God) has begotten a son,” certainly preach such a monstrous falsehood, that the very Heavens might crack, the earth might cleave asunder and the mountains might crumble to pieces - at their ascribing a son to the Compassionate (God), It is not befitting to the Compassionate (God) that He should beget a son. There is none in the heavens and in the earth but must come to the Compassionate (Allah) in full submission (19:18).

Although al-Llah is described as the Compassionate, free rein is given to slay the idolaters, or to convert them by the sword, as IS has again done in mass genocides of Yazidi men:

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

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

Let it be known that only those people should fight in the cause of Allah who are willing to exchange the life of this world for the Hereafter; and whoever fights for the cause of Allah, whether he dies or is victorious, will soon be granted a mighty reward (4:74).

O Prophet! Strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be unyielding to them; and their abode is hell, and evil is the destination (9:73).

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

Do you think that you will enter the garden while Allah has not yet known those who strive hard from among you, and (He has not) known the patient. And certainly you desired death before you met it, so indeed you have seen it and you look [at it] (3:142).

and (as for) those who are slain in the way of Allah, He will by no means allow their deeds to perish. He will guide them and improve their condition. And cause them to enter the garden which He has made known to them (47:4).

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

\[
\text{Certainly it is We who give life and cause to die, and We are the inheritors of all (15:23).}
\]

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

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

4: Creation Myths and Carnal Misadventures

Virtually all peoples with a written, or oral record describe accounts of how they imagine they and the world around them came to be in creation myths the world over as diverse as there are people. This has been happening ever since small bands of people first told stories round the campfire. These stories deal with otherworldly conditions as we have already seen in the San creation story, which has many elements parallel to the sabbatical creation. They are not intended to be practically accurate instructions, as would be how to make a precise poison potion for one’s arrows or how to find a particular rare herb in the forest, but are metaphorical tales which help a people makes sense of the world and their place in it.

Likewise, we find the sabbatical creation account in Genesis to be a charming and deeply endearing creation myth. As already noted, God appears as the ‘Elohim (male plural) intimating a dyadic being, who makes woman and man in their likeness. The ‘Elohim take the Earth tohu va vohu – without form or void – and darkness on the face of the deep. It is not said the ‘Elohim created this, indeed just that their spirit moved on the face of the waters, merely saying “let there be light” and there was. The ‘Elohim separate the light from the darkness into day and night. This makes metaphorical sense as a primal division of the existential condition we experience consciously but it makes no sense at all physically, as there is yet no sun to make the day and night. Next day the ‘Elohim make a great, dome or firmament, in the midst of the waters, with the part above becoming heaven. The third day ‘Elohim gather dry land out of the lower waters, and suddenly, on command, all the plants and grasses appear replete with seed-bearing fruit. But it is only into the fourth day that the ‘Elohim get around to fixing the Sun and Moon and stars onto the great dome of the firmament although day and night already existed and the plants had already borne fruit. This makes no real-time physical sense. It is a purely metaphorical ‘dreamtime’ account. On the fifth day ‘Elohim get around to the birds and sea creatures and on the sixth day the land animals, and, almost as an afterthought, make woman and man male and female “in our image, after our likeness” to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over every living thing. And to enact a ritual observance, on the seventh day, the ‘Elohim observed Shabbat.

Taken as a metaphorical creation myth, this is one of the most beautiful accounts ever produced by human culture and a testimony to Hebrew eloquence of culture, but as a literal description of the natural universe clung to by religious believers, in frank rejection of the evidence from nature, it is dangerous in its simplicity and lack of any realistic correspondence with the physical universe as we have later come to discover it. It has been suggested that this account comes from Northern Israel and the kingly traditions of Solomon, a tradition that later became largely lost in the exile of the ten tribes by the Assyrians and that the Yawistic Eden story is a product of the Southern Kingdom of Judea, which retained its Jewish governance until the exile into Babylon. In
any event the Eden story has a starker and more punitive message that has placed women in bondage to man and cast human nature under the pall of recrimination ever since.

Several aspects of the sabbatical creation show parallels with Chaldean cuneiform tablets depicting a genesis myth, including a creation from chaotic waters, the firmaments above and below, the creation of the sun and moon, the animals and humans and their fall from grace. The seven days is also a reflection of the seven layers of heaven and of hell in the Sumerian cosmology. Likewise there is a Babylonian flood myth in which a mountain top is reached and a dove is dispatched which cannot find land. In fig 6 the Temptation seal is shown depicting a man or horned god, a woman, a seven-branched tree and the serpent, predating the Eden story. One of the principal derivations of eden is Akkadian *edinnu* - steppe, or plain, attributed to the plain of the Euphrates river, although a second derivation *'dn* as a verb meaning well-watered, or giving abundance, has been found in old Aramaic and Assyrian inscriptions on a statue of Hadad from Tel Fekhuiyeh in northern Syria.

Shortly into the second chapter of Genesis there is a disjunction, when having apparently already made humanity female and male in their likeness, God is suddenly referred to in the singular. There is a mist watering the ground and Yahweh forms man of the dust of the ground, and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life; and man becomes a living soul. This is a very primitive act, akin to the San myth, and far from a creation on a cosmic scale. Yahweh breathes in the same way that we breathe. Yahweh then plants a garden to the East in Eden. He doesn’t just say ‘let there be a garden’ and it is as the ‘Elohim did. He ‘plants’ the garden as we would, and food-bearing trees and the two trees, one of life and the other of knowledge of dark and light.

Adam says this is “flesh of my flesh”, “bone of my bones”, “woman taken out of man”, pronouncing the token of sexual fertility, to “cleave unto his wife”, so they become “one flesh” and they were “naked and unashamed”. Then the serpent beguiles the woman who seeks wisdom into eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, saying “you will not surely die but your eyes will be opened and ye shall be as gods knowing”, and she also gives the fruit to Adam. The only ostensible result is that they cover themselves with fig leaves, something no married couple bother to do unless someone else might be looking, and indeed there was, for Yahweh noticed and became angry and Adam hid and then blamed the woman Eve.

Yahweh then curses everyone, man, woman and serpent, making woman suffer pain in childbirth to be ruled over by her husband, the serpent to crawl in the dust, and man to live by the sweat of his brow among the thistles and thorns. They are shut out of the garden with a flaming sword and cursed with mortality, lest they also eat of the Tree of Life and become immortal like the gods – as ‘one of us’ – intimating Yahweh is not a lone deity after all. As an afterthought, Yahweh, ever the humble artisan, makes leather clothes for them. Adam now impregnates his wife and the generations of humanity ensue.

Taken metaphorically, this can be seen both as a myth about the origin of mortality and its relationship with sexuality. Before the fruit were eaten Adam knew Eve in the sense of cleaving unto her, but it is only afterwards that she becomes pregnant. So the myth is explaining that mortality is the price for sexual fertility. This is in a sense a deep truth. The very variety created by sexual
recombination means individual mortality because our children are all diverse mixtures of their parent’s identities. It is also intimating that humanity has fallen out of paradisiacal relationship with nature through the knowledge of good and evil, just as urban civilizations have succeeded gatherer-hunter societies in the wilderness. This is the principal and key message we should take as a warning for the future.

But as a moral tale it is incendiary and profoundly disabling to human integrity. This is a patriarchal fraud. Woman becomes the devil’s gateway as Augustine put it, casting women into an inferior status from alpha to omega of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, leading to all manner of diabolical punishments and disrespect of the immortal sex. Patriarchal monotheism is also a device for men to gain control over female reproductive choice because of the overweening fear of paternity uncertainty. We can also see in the later stories of Laban asking Jacob to tarry for seven years at a stretch at the matriarchal household and Jacob rejecting the matriarchal order and escaping with his wives Rachel and Leah, with Rachel hiding the teraphim – the house gods – under her menstrual skirt to participate in founding the ten patriarchal tribes of Israel. The Eden story thus becomes a central motif to assert reproductive control of man over woman.

Finally, and most tragically, the moral of the Eden story is that humanity is doomed from the start to have sinned by disobedience to God, resulting in the knowledge of good and evil becoming an endless expression of original sin, woven into the entire sweep of human history, from the very beginning to the end of days. By this means the Eden story dooms humanity to the status of flawed beings, doomed to mortality through transgression against the almighty. Beings who cannot be trusted, who cannot trust themselves, whose only salvation is to pray to god and submit their flawed identities to the divine.

Neither does it satisfactorily explain mortality. The story of Maui shows us that even the great hero’s attempt to conquer death was laughable pomposity. This is a reasonable assessment of the nature of life, which the Eden story is not, because it falsely seduces us into thinking we might have had immortal life if Eve hadn’t sinned. It is clear that before the fruit humans were already fertile because they were admonished to leave the parents to cleave unto one another. You can’t have parents without sexual fertility, so eating the fruit didn’t change the situation. We are mortal because sexuality causes our offspring to be part of each of the parents, not just a clone of one parthenogenetic being. It is the teeming diversity of sexual offspring that enables us to resist disease and to evolve as complex organisms. We owe to it our very existence. If the Polynesians knew immortality was a pretentious hope, the exilic Yahwists blaming it on women is simply a device to control women of no credible virtue.

5: Heaven, Hell and the End of Days

The historical span of Christianity has become like a great epoch-spanning bow, with Jesus the arrow at the centre representing the violence of confrontation between God and the Devil, as expressed in the crucifixion. At one end of the bow lies Eden and the Fall from paradise. At the other end is the apocalyptic Day of Judgment when sinners are condemned to Hell and the righteous go to Heaven, with the Jesus of the Second Coming standing over all in military might like a feudal lord of power, as expressed in the hyperbolic tones of the Book of Revelation.

We know the Christian church was supposed to be only a temporary guardian of the faith until the imminently expected return of the Lord in Power, claimed in the Synoptics by Jesus to be in the very same generation:

Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1).  
Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.  
Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away (Luke 21:32).

But the promised Kingdom never came so, finessing the script, the gospels also had Jesus leave it up to Abba to determine the time, while at the same time claiming it could happen at any moment:

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father (Mark 13:32).
And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not (Luke 12:39).

However in the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus denied the Kingdom was any other realm than the natural world in which we live and our inner experience of reality:

If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,'
then the birds of the sky will precede you.
If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you.
Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you.
When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father (3).

His disciples said, "When will the kingdom come?" Jesus said, "It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying 'here it is' or 'there it is'. Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it." (113)

Two millennia later, the church, which was conceived as just a temporary steward, clings onto power in perpetuity, while Jesus hangs idolatrously dripping sacrificial blood beside every church altar, while the faithful continue to eat his flesh and drink his blood as the soma and sangre of the Eucharist – the central blood-letting sine qua non of the Christian faith.

But these notions of eternal salvation and damnation in triage and cosmic cataclysm are not part of the original Hebrew tradition at all. Older passages in the Hebrew bible simply refer to She'ol, the common grave of all humans, a place of darkness to which all the dead go, both the righteous and the unrighteous, regardless of the moral choices made in life, a place of stillness and darkness, cut off from life and from God. In some texts, Sheol is considered to be the home of both the righteous and the wicked, separated into respective compartments; in others, it was considered a place of punishment, meant for the wicked dead alone. In the Hebrew Bible, abaddon, with the meaning of destruction, is used with reference to a bottomless pit, often appearing alongside sheol. The Babylonians had a similar underworld called Aralu, and the Greeks had one known as Hades. When the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek in ancient Alexandria around 200 BC Hades was substituted for Sheol, and this is reflected in the New Testament, where Hades is both the underworld of the dead and the personification of the evil it represents. In Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scripture, Gehenna is also named as a destination of the wicked. Gehenna was originally the Valley of the Son of Hinnom outside ancient Jerusalem - the site was where followers of various Ba'als and Canaanite gods, including Moloch, sacrificed their children by fire, thereafter deemed to be cursed.

Later Jewish thought, focused on work in this life, has a looser set of beliefs in the after life, with room for individual shades of opinion. Truly righteous souls ascend directly to Gan Eden. The average person descends to Gei Hinnom. Some view Gehinnom as a place of torture and punishment, fire and brimstone. Others imagine it less harshly, as a place where one reviews the actions of his/her life and repents for past misdeeds. The soul's sentence in Gehinnom is usually limited to a twelve-month period of purgation before it takes its place in Olam Ha-Ba, the World to Come, loosely associated with the resurrection of the dead in the messianic age, but used generally to refer to the spiritual afterlife. Only the utterly wicked do not ascend to Gan Eden at the end of this year. Sources differ on what happens to these souls at the end of their initial time of purgation. Some say that the wicked are utterly destroyed and cease to exist, while others believe in eternal damnation.

We can of course trace the origins of heaven and hell back to the astral religions, where there were seven layers of the heavens and of the underworld. In Sumeria, Inanna, the Queen of Heaven, having made sweet love to her consort Dumuzi, completes her knowledge of the universe by making a journey to the seven levels of the underworld, losing her protective seven veils of clothing, to become stark naked, before returning to the world of men, then sacrificing her husband Dumuzi for assuming the instruments of power in her absence, becoming an archetype of seasonal male sacrifice, recounted in the Baptist's beheading after Salome's dance.
Monotheists, including Christians and Muslims, believe biological life in the physical universe is just a testing ground for God to see if we have obeyed His will, our free-will having been dispensed by Him only as an illusory precursor to His ultimate rewards, or dire punishments, if we deviate in any way from His divine plan. Some Christian fundamentalists go so far as imagining we will all float up into the sky in the Rapture, leaving the flawed realm of nature behind, and would-be Muslim martyrs fantasize they will see Allah's face and sexually cavort with black-eyed virgins in paradise, even when they blow themselves up in gruesome and violent suicide bombings, frequently killing many innocent people along the way.

The nature of Hell is generally palpable enough, namely unrelenting torture by beastly beings in the fires of hell. Little attention is paid to how such a painful and protracted scenario of borderline destruction of the body can be maintained, except as some kind of conscious nightmare devoid of any physical substance, or meaning, despite the all-to-real haunting visions of fires and physical torment.

Few questions are asked by such believers about the inconsistencies in their views of heaven or paradise, the Christian one a sexless world of angelic devotion to God, with little or no free choice, and the Muslim one sexually skewed and ultimately hedonistic, with black eyed virgins recreated undefiled each morning for the pleasure of men. Neither the Christian, nor the Muslim paradise, are real places, with the manifest complexity, or verifiable reality of nature, but physically unrealizable imaginary fantasy spaces lacking biological meaning and consistency.

At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven (Matt 20:30).

In the Christian heaven, angels are portrayed, as if still in a human body except sexless, even if in nominal male and female form echoing the debased sexuality of their earthly biological existence, with large feathered bird-like wings attached, consistent with their need to fly up in the air into the flat-Earth heaven, as a place in the firmament of the sky, ignoring the fact there is no resting place in the stratosphere, the lack of air to give such wings lift at high altitudes, and the endless frozen vacuum that permeates space. Why or how God would create an eternal heaven in outer space is an astronomical absurdity.
Muslim paradise is even more fraught with contradictions - a veritable hedonistic pornographic cornucopia, with every righteous man able to command multiple wives, as well as having 72 black-eyed virgins to wait on his every whim, recreated each morning so that they can be enjoyed sexually to the full without ever having been defiled:

Surely those who guard (against evil) are in a secure place, In gardens and springs;
They shall wear of fine and thick silk, (sitting) face to face;
Thus (shall it be), and We will wed them with houris - pure, beautiful ones (44:51).

The chaste virginity of the black-eyed houris is neither violated by man nor jinn:

And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two gardens. Having in them various kinds. In both of them are two fountains flowing. In both of them are two pairs of every fruit. Reclining on beds, the inner coverings of which are of silk brocade; and the fruits of the two gardens shall be within reach. In them shall be those who restrained their eyes [bashful virgins], whom neither any man nor jinn has touched before. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? (55:46)

No mention is made of what such a heaven offers for women, or what happens to these feminine houris in the dead of night to repurify them, or mercilessly annihilate them only to regenerate them de novo, or whether they also have immortal souls, their own free-will, or how such sex and so much of it, apparently without reproduction, can have any meaning, or how the many kinds of trees which sport pleasurable drinks, bunches of grapes, jewels (fig 29) or gold and silver cups, can exist, except in a fantasy version of the physical universe. Of course confirmed believers will always say this frank dreamscape is simply beyond the conceptual capacity of humble humanity to even comprehend, leaving themselves completely credulous to these contrivances.

Fig 20: Purgatory Carracci

In neither the Muslim nor the Christian case is there any constructive purpose for the eternal paradisiacal existence. There is no natural evolution of the existential condition, except for endless hymns praising God, or worthy utterances of "Salaam" and yet more unmitigated sexual pleasure. No new journeys appear to be made. No new learning experiences, or startling discoveries. It is as if the eternal heaven has become a sterile experience frozen in time, as when a drowning man sees his life flashing before his eyes and everything that has ever happened takes place in the brief moments before unconsciousness takes over.

To add to the cultural evolutionary diversity of heaven and hell, Catholics have added a third realm, purgatory, an intermediate state after physical death, in which those destined for heaven "undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven". Only those who die in the state of grace but have not in life reached a sufficient level of holiness can be in purgatory, and therefore no one in purgatory will remain forever in that state or go to hell. To add to the cultural variety, the status of purgatory is contested by large sections of the Orthodox and Protestant communities, who variously regard it as an ambiguous condition, tacitly accept its role, or condemn it outright as an evil heresy.

Fig 21: Zoroastrian Chinvat Bridge and the Judgment

The end of days notion of a Day of Judgment involving the alternate fates of heaven and hell was first pictured by Zoroaster as the cleansing fire of Ahura Mazda burning out the ignorance of Angra Mainyu in our first full model of the nature-violating hell fire and damnation later pictured in apocalyptic scenarios, from Revelation to the Quran.
The paradise of Zoroastrianism is attained the fourth day after death by crossing the Bridge of the Separator, which widens when the righteous approach it. The righteous soul crosses the bridge and is met by a beautiful maiden who is the physical and feminine embodiment of all his good works on earth. He is then escorted into the House of Song to await the Last Day. On this day, everyone will be purified and live in a new world absent of evil and full of youthful rejoicing. But for the less than righteous, the bridge turns on its side and becomes like a razor. The god Mithra is there with a scale to balance the good and evil deeds done during one’s lifetime, and if evil deeds prevail, then the soul is tormented by an old hag before it falls off the bridge into a hell of purification worse than Dante's inferno, portrayed in the Vision of Arda Viraf. However note carefully that the Zoroastrian hell was only a temporary state before one became purified and entered the paradisiacal realm, so although the fires of purification were gruesome in the extreme, the idea of eternal damnation is a perversion of the entire purification concept. Like Upanishadic and Buddhist traditions, Zoroastrianism seeks integration of the psyche through purification of faults, not eternal damnation.

Fig 21b: Ancient Egyptian papyrus depicting the journey into the afterlife.

But the idea of a moral judgment to enter the afterlife is very ancient. The afterlife and its belief system in Ancient Egyptian religion, is one of the earliest known in recorded history. The Egyptians believed that when the body died, parts of its soul known as *ka* (body double) and the *ba* (personality) would go to the Kingdom of the Dead, while the soul dwelt in the Fields of Aaru. Arriving at one's reward in afterlife was a demanding ordeal, requiring a sin-free heart and the ability to recite the spells, passwords and formulae of the Book of the Dead and a sarcophagus with inscriptions. In the Hall of Two Truths, the deceased's heart was weighed against the Shu feather of truth and justice taken from the headdress of the goddess Ma'at. If the heart was lighter than the feather, they could pass on to Aaru, where they would exist in pleasure for all eternity, but if it were heavier they would be devoured by the demon Ammit.

We have to ask here of the so-called god acting in history, cursing and redeeming his people, that if the entire notion of the Judgment was an alien idea spawned by a “heathen” religion following an alien sun-god of light, what does this mean about the notion of the “true god”? Is Ahura Mazda also a manifestation of the ‘true deity’, acting with the Hebrew deity to bring about a knowledge of the impending Judgment? If so, how far does this go? Is Vishnu also a manifestation? Is Kali, Inanna or Asherah in some way? We rapidly converge on a form of universal animism of the deities. The reality is clearly that cultures evolve through human insight generating novel religious concepts that purport to underlie the nature of conscious experience. Rather than the gods being absolute, they are shifting miasmas of the human spiritual imagination.

Fig 22: The Last Judgment - Giovanni da Modena, depicts the fate of Muhammad, bound to a rock in Hell, centre right, being clawed by demons. It has been the subject of a thwarted terror attack.
We can see this evolution again in the comparison between the more vestigial references to the Judgment in Luke 21:23 and the fully-fledged dysphoria in Revelation. In Luke the apocalypse is largely worldly - falling by the sword, captivity, Roman occupation – followed by largely natural signs in the sun, moon and stars usually referring to eclipses, the sea and waves roaring referring to natural storms, with a final hint of the powers of heaven shaken before the Son of Man comes with power and glory:

But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

In Thessalonians Paul has a somewhat different vision of the unbearable lightness of being:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:16).

Fig 23: We now know the heavens are full of galaxies and stars and the Earth is a planet orbiting around the Sun, whose biosphere is under threat of mass extinction from human impacts partly driven through scorched Earth religious attitudes. The rapture is a fallacy. Above all religion needs to adapt and evolve towards cherishing and protecting the Earth and its living diversity for the passage of the future generations.

Paul’s ‘rapture’, is both completely unnatural, and profoundly dangerous because it leads to many Christians today imagining the second coming of Jesus as the heavenly rapture in which the ‘late planet Earth’ is carelessly discarded for an eternal life in mid-air.

By contrast, Revelation is a fully-fledged apocalyptic fantasy of the triage of all life amid conflict of nations in which there are cataclysmic cosmological phenomena - a great earthquake where the sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon like blood, mixing an eclipse of the sun, an eclipse of the moon and an earthquake. The stars of heaven fall to the earth, the sky recedes like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island is moved out of place. This takes us straight back to the flat-Earth cosmology of the sabbatical creation. There is no way that the islands and mountains would just move a bit when the stars fall and the sky rolls up. This only makes sense as a conscious nightmare vision, or a political hyperbole, not a genuine cosmological event.

Fig 24: Panorama of the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane centre left, the cemetery where the 144,000 undead are believed to rise, centre, and right, the Gates of Mercy filled with rubble by the Muslims for fear the messiah will return, as in Ezekiel.

It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same (Ezek 44:3).
Revelation is replete with ornate details, from the seven seals to the seven trumpets sounding, to the four horsemen, with everyone hiding from the wrath of the lamb having seven horns and seven eyes. The 144,000 Hebrews are sealed. Gradually more and more apocalyptic phenomena are revealed from hail and fire mingled with blood falling from the sky, as well as a mountain and the star of wormwood killing a neat third of the sea creatures and ships, a third of the rivers and a third of the vegetation. Then a third of the heavenly bodies go out too and another star opens up the bottomless pit.

Further battles ensue, in which a third of all humans are killed yet another triage, the powers of the beasts become for a time ascendant, we see the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars in labour with a male child, and the great whore of Babylon arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. Eventually the forces of the “Lord” become ascendant amid further poisoning turning the seas to blood and other forms of destruction.

Ultimately all this tumult and desecration leads simply to the new Jerusalem surrounded by the Tree of Life. By contrast with the cosmological hyperbole of the intervening chapters, we thus come right back to the all-too-physical gates of the heavenly city, and the all-too-botanical Tree of Life with its twelve monthly fruits for the healing of the nations.

However there is no clearly unambiguous acceptance within Christian eschatology about either the afterlife, or the nature of eternal damnation. Many formative Christian thinkers, from Luther to Calvin, and several existing denominations, such as the Seventh Day Adventists adhere to mortalism - the notion that the soul is not eternal and that when we die we enter into an unconscious state, as the Sadducees did in Yeshua’s time. However, unlike the Sadducees, Christian mortalists believe they will nevertheless be revived on the Day of Judgment. There is also a continuing sentiment of universal reconciliation within Christianity, although it is rejected by the church hierarchy, that eternal damnation in hell is inconsistent with a forgiving God, and that hell is a kind of purgatory so that, as in the Zoroastrian account, all souls are eventually redeemed.

In the Quran, Hell (fig 29) is described as “an evil resting place” and the “Fire.” But fire is just the beginning of the torment, because it is like a wall enclosing the wicked, and when they cry out, they are showered with water as “hot as molten brass,” which scalds their faces. The unbelievers wear garments of fire and are lashed with rods of iron, and if they try to escape, they are dragged back and told to “taste the torment of the Conflagration.”

There are also clear indications of the Zoroastrian Judgment woven into the Quranic account alongside Jewish and Christian material. The sexy houris of paradise seem to be an inflation of the maiden waiting for the blessed over the Chinvat Bridge. The bridge is likewise in the Quran, and even more explicitly in the hadith, as the Sirat bridge, which is sharper than the edge of sword and thinner than a hair:

We will call them to account in the company of all their Satans and set them on their knees around the Fire of Hell; then from every sect. We will certainly drag out its stoutest rebels against the Compassionate (Allah). Certainly We know best who deserves most to be burned therein. There is not a single one of you, who shall not pass over it [the Sirat Bridge], this absolute decree of your Lord is unavoidable; then We will deliver those who were pious and leave the wrongdoers therein humbled on their knees (19:68).
Ironically the Islamic hell allows for the Muslim believers, whatever their sins, to be purified in the Zoroastrian and later Jewish manner, but infidels to suffer eternal damnation, as in the Christian condemnation:

Most of the ancients went astray before them, though We had sent Warners to them. See what was the end of those who had been forewarned: they all perished, except the sincere devotees of Allah (37:71).

In a description reminiscent of Revelation, the angel Israfil [the Burning One] will sound the trumpet and all living creatures, mankind, angels and jinn then living, will die. Another blast and all will be raised to life. Allah's throne will appear in the clouds, carried by eight angels. Believers will receive a book of their deeds in their right hand, and unbelievers their left hand. The books will be opened and men's works weighed on scales (mizan) as in the Zoroastrian description. In fear, men will look for someone to plead with Allah. They will go to Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, but find no help. At last they will turn to Muhammad and Allah will judge, as in the Earthquake:

When the earth will be shaken to her utmost convulsion, and the earth shall bring out all her inner burdens, man shall say: "What is happening to her?" On that Day she shall report whatever had happened on her, for your Lord shall have commanded her to do so. On that Day men shall proceed in sorted out groups to be shown their 'Book of Deeds.' Then, whoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it there, and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it there (99:1).

The Quranic Day of Resurrection also has signs in the form of an eclipse:

"When will this Day of Resurrection be?" Well, it will come when the sight shall be dazed, the moon becomes dark, and the sun and the moon are brought together (75:6).

We even witness the splitting of the Moon, although this supposed astronomical calamity has little enough effect on the Earth for the unbelievers to think it a mere magic trick:

The hour drew nigh and the moon did rend asunder. And if they see a miracle they turn aside and say: Transient magic. And they call (it) a lie, and follow their low desires (54:1).

This is consistent with an archaic view of the heavens in the Quran as a firmament with lamps erected on it as in the original sabbatical creation:

Blessed is the One Who has decked the sky with constellations and placed in it a lamp and a shining moon (25:61).

This leads to a misunderstanding of the fact that the difference between the Sun's and Moon's orbital periods means the Sun does effectively overtake the Moon during the day, in the time between the old and new Moon:

Neither it is possible for the sun to overtake the moon, nor for the night to outstrip the day: each floats along in its own orbit (36:40).

The night outstripping the day is again an archaic reference to the sabbatical cosmology in which day and night are created before the Sun and Moon. This view is clearly physically incorrect and cannot represent an accurate description of a theistic cosmos any more than the sabbatical creation does.

Fig 26: The Islamic Day of Judgment,
There are several pointers here. The entire concept of the End of Days is an ultimate scene of religious violence, not just violence committed by those portrayed as evil characters, but unmitigated violence on the part of God. This is a hideous projection of the sacrificial principle to the whole universe. There is no evidence whatever in nature, that the world has to undergo a mass extinction of all forms of life and a cosmological disruption of the stars and planets for moral redemption to ensue. Sacrificing the entire natural universe to achieve a violent victory by God and in the case of the Christian Revelation, his rather feudal looking Lord of the second coming on a charger is an utterly dangerous self-destructive myth of diabolical proportions and utterly violent intent. What hope could there be for us in the new Jerusalem if this is the way it had to be achieved and we are to be forever subject to such a needlessly destructive power structure? The only legitimate way it can be read is as a warning of the consequences of the apocalyptic tumult as an end game we run perilously ever closer to through our utopian religious quest to the exclusion of healing and regeneration. Perhaps apocalypse is a fundamental feature of the future shock of our fall from paradisiacal integration with nature as gatherer-hunters in spawning the epoch of clash of the civilizations. Maybe it is engrained in our psyche and world view, not as a divinely ordained inevitability, but a disastrous scenario we fearfully anticipate and slide far too close to, through our religious fervour as moths to a candle flame which is more likely to incinerate us than to enlighten us.

6: Serpent to Shaitan: The Evolution of the Devil

In “The Origin of Satan”, Elaine Pagels outlines the social history of how Satan came to be the arch figure of darkness portrayed in Christian scripture. The earliest references to an opponent of God are prophetic references to the monsters of Canaanite mythology in the context of condemning those who have assimilated with idolatrous culture:

> the Lord will punish the Leviathan, the twisting serpent and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea (Is 27:1).

The first evidence we see of Satan is as one of the Sons of God, or bene ‘elohim, referred to in Genesis in their corrupted union with the daughters of men who became giants, and in Numbers in the form of an angel testing Ba’alam. In Job however, he is referred to as Satan, not as an adversary of god, but as a tester:

> there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life (Job 1:6).

Clearly there is no sense of rebellion here on Satan’s part, but also clearly we have a cosmology in which there are other divine agents, each with their own intentionality, forming a polytheistic host, although clearly with the Lord at the head of a militaristic royal court.

In Chronicles, Satan also plays a role as tester but this time he causes mayhem when David heeds his enticement and institutes a census over Israel:

> And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it (1 Chr 21).

This causes social unrest and displeases God, who sends an angel standing between the earth and sky to smite Israel. David is given a poisoned chalice of one of three unpalatable options by God and seventy thousand men dies in the plague before David sets up an altar on the threshing floor of Ornan and the crisis is appeased.

By the time of the returning exiles Zechariah portrays a situation in which there is internal division when the
returnees try to impose their purist doctrines and take charge of the priestly offices:

And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? (Zech 3:1)

Satan is here speaks for a disaffected and unsuccessful party against another party of fellow Israelites who wanted to continue their more inclusive religious worship, but he is also coming to be portrayed more as an adversary of God, who sides with the purist returnees.

Israel, having been annexed by the Assyrians, put in exile by the Babylonians, and returned under the presiding influence of the Persians, now found themselves under the Hellenistic dynasty established by Alexander. When Antochus Epiphanes imposed Greek worship and stormed the Temple the Maccabean revolt ensued, which ultimately led to the Hasmonean family gaining control of the priesthood in what was now a theocratic state. However, as they in turn abandoned the austere habits of their predecessors, the Pharisees, farmers and tradespeople demanded that the Hasmoneans relinquish the high priesthood to those that deserved it. Other more radically dissident groups including the Essenes, and followers of John the Baptist and Jesus denounced the high priestly family and its allies. The religious invective had now moved from Israel versus the nations to who was on the side of God and who was of Belial, the power of evil called by many different names, Satan, Beelzebub, Semihazah, Azazel, Prince of Darkness – the evil in our midst, echoing again the Zoroastrian division of the universe between the enlightenment of Ahura Mazda and the ignorance of Angra Mainyu.

Later an apocryphal version of the life of Adam and Eve, “Vita Adae et Evae” pictures Satan’s supposed fall arising from his jealousy over God’s creation of Adam. In various apocrypha, from the Book of Watchers to Jubilees, the union of the Sons of God to the Daughters of men is attributed to the emergence of various forms of evil, from bad spirits subverting humanity, to metallurgy and the lust for material wealth. By the time of the Essenes, the polarization of the cosmos between the forces of light and dark had become supreme in the Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness:

The Prince of Light thou hast appointed to come to our support; but Satan, the angel Mastema, thou hast created for the pit; he rules in darkness, and his purpose is to bring about evil and sin.

So finally we come to the form of Satan as represented in Christian scripture in Luke, as a fully-fledged adversary of God and the Lord:

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Luke 4:5).
And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

Then of course Jesus is accused of blasphemously having dealings with the devil:

If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you (Luke 11:18).

And although God has sacrificed his only begotten Son so that we can be forgiven our sins, and Jesus has intentionally passed the sop to Judas assigning him the role, Satan is nevertheless blamed for the betrayal:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me...
He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.
And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.
And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly (John 13:21).

When we turn to the Quranic Satan, or Shaitan, sometimes called Iblis, described as one of the jinns who are collectively referred to as satans, we find a less threatening character who has no real powers, but leads believers and non-believers alike astray by enticement and invitation, until the Day of Judgment, when he confesses that he has no powers, fears al-Llah, and that it is their own fault for being so gullible:

Satan will say: “In fact, the promises which Allah made to you were all true; I too made some promises to you but failed to keep any of them. However, I had no power over you. I just invited you, and you accepted my invitation. Now! Do not blame me, but blame yourselves (14:22).

In several repeated passages, the Quran follows the apocryphal line of attributing the fall of Iblis to pride in the face of al-Llah’s creation of Adam:

When We said to the angels “Prostrate yourselves before Adam,” they all prostrated themselves except Iblees (Satan), who refused. Then We said: “O Adam! This Satan is a real enemy to you and to your wife. Do not let him get you both out of Paradise and get you in trouble. Here in Paradise you shall go neither hungry nor naked; you shall neither suffer from thirst nor from the scorching heat.” - But Satan seduced him saying: “O Adam! Should I show you the Tree of Immortality and an everlasting kingdom?” They both ended up eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. As a result their private parts became apparent to them and they both began to cover themselves with the leaves from the Garden (20:116).

Again the satans have little power in heaven and are chased every which way to keep them out:

We have indeed decked the worldly heaven with beautiful stars and have secured it against all obstinate rebellious Satans. They cannot even hear the words of the exalted assembly of angels and they are darted at from every side they are repulsed and are under a constant chastisement. Eavesdroppers are persuaded by a flaming fire of piercing brightness. Ask them: “What is more difficult - their creation or the rest of Our creation? - Them We have created out of a sticky clay (37:6).

Satan himself is given respite until the day of Resurrection by al-Llah, but is cursed to eventually be thrown in the pit when he pledges to be a tester in the Old Testament mold and seduce the generations of mankind:

Satan requested: “Give me respite till the Day of Resurrection.” Allah said: “The respite you requested is hereby granted.” Satan declared: “Since You let me deviate, now I will lie in ambush for mankind on Your Right Way. I Will come upon them from the front, from the rear, from the right, and from the left, and You will not find most of them to be grateful.” Allah said: “Get out from here, you despicable outcast; I will certainly fill hell with you and all of them who follow you.” (7:14)

Critical to submission to al-Llah is belief in the Day of Resurrection where everyone’s sins will be weighed, and here it becomes clear that the enticements of the satans are actually part of al-Llah’s and the angels plan:

In their case, Iblees’ (Satan’s) suspicions proved true, as they all followed him except a small group of the believers, even
though he had no authority over them. It all happened because We wanted to see who among them believed in the hereafter and who is in doubt concerning it (34:20).

Conspiring in secret is the work of Satan, who means to vex the believers; but he cannot harm them at all except as Allah permits; so in Allah let the believers put their trust (58:10).

But the people of Mecca were to accuse Muhammad himself of listening to Satan in the notorious episode of the Satanic verses:

O people of Mecca! Your companion has not gone mad; he (Muhammad) indeed saw him (Gabriel) in the clear horizon and he is not stingy to withhold the knowledge of the unseen. This (Qur'an) is not the word of an accursed Satan (81:22).

Early Islamic historians recount that Muhammad at first accepted the goddesses al-Lat, al-Uzza and Manat highly popular around Mecca, sometimes called the banat al-Lah, or daughters of al-Llah, as intermediaries.

The historians Ibn Sa'd and al Tabari describe the origin of the 'Satanic Verses' from an early tradition 70 years after his death.

The prophet is approached by the Quraysh and persuaded to utter the verses in return for promise of admission to Mecca's inner circles. He tries to find a place for the goddesses without compromising his monotheism. "When the apostle saw that his people had turned their backs on him and he was pained by their estrangement from what he brought them from God, he longed that there should come to him from God a message that would reconcile his people to him. One day, Tabari says, while he was meditating in the Ka'aba, the answer seemed to come in a revelation that gave a place to the three 'goddesses' without compromising his monotheistic vision:

"Have you then considered the Lat and the Uzza, And Manat, the third, the last? these are the exalted birds [gharaniq] whose intercession is approved"

In "Muhammad" p112, Karen Armstrong recounts that according to this version of the story, the Quraysh were delighted with the new invocation, which in al-Kalbi's words was the traditional invocation made by the Quraysh to the goddesses as they circumambulated the Ka'aba. The gharaniq were probably Numidian cranes which were thought to fly higher than any other bird. Muhammad, may have believed in the existence of the banat al-Llah as he believed in the existence of angels and djinn, was giving the 'goddesses' a delicate compliment, without compromising his message.

It is said that Muhammad later removed these verses because he was later told by the angel Gabriel they were "Satan inspired":

Have you then considered the Lat and the Uzza, And Manat, the third, the last?
What! for you the males and for Him the females! This indeed is an unjust division!
They are naught but names which you have named, you and your fathers;
Allah has not sent for them any authority. They follow naught but conjecture and their low desire (53:19).

Immediately he decries angels with female names – despite the black-eyed houris of paradise:

Most surely they who do not believe in the hereafter name the angels with female names (53:27).

The rejection of the Manat, which follows immediately on his night flight on the axis mundi, led to the historic conflict with the Qura'sh, which resulted in the flight to Medina.

7: Jihad, Sakina and Takiya: Stoning, Enslavement and Genocide

This brings us in turn to the person of Muhammad and the foundation of Islam. Muhammad was the beneficiary of a strong woman Khadijah, his first and only wife until the age of 50, who was a merchant trader whose resources made it possible for him to embark on a visionary quest formulating a religious viewpoint that attempted to assimilate the patriarchal religion of the Jews into the astral worship of gods and goddesses that was a heritage of the high culture of Arabic Nabatea at the time of Jesus. The Kaaba had a tradition of religious tolerance that saw 360 images representing the syncretic astral beliefs of the region, including portraits of Jesus and Mary. The region around Mecca was rich with the worship of the three goddesses al-Uzza the mighty, al-Lat, which simply meant goddess, and Manat. One can find very ancient inscriptions to both al-Llah and al-Lat - god and goddess - in Sinai attesting to their ancient names and al-Uzza, al-Lat and Dhushara hark back to Nabatea, integrating ancient deities of stone cubes or Ka’aba with later Greek motifs of fertility worship.

Muhammad claimed to have his inspiration from visions in a cave imparted by the Angel Gabriel, in a clear reference back to the Jewish roots of his belief, just as was his initial invocation to pray towards Jerusalem and the Jewish folklore and biblical history permeating the Qu’ran from end to end such as Solomon’s hoopoe. In this he is acting as a visionary religious innovator just as Jesus did, but with a very different agenda. While Jesus confounded peoples assumptions by his actions, creating chaos as a rebel against the unjust social order of his time, resulting in his been accused of blasphemy, Muhammad sought to set up a new Arabic monotheistic religion based on the Jewish heritage, cementing it with liberal tracts of archaic Arab tribal law, defining the status of women in law to be only half that of man. Through his own desire to sequester his own many wives after an incident when a male relative stayed too long on his marriage night to a new bride, Muhammad handed down a heritage where women are veiled, sequestered and chaperoned by their male relatives in a way which denies them freedom of reproductive choice and leaves women in many Muslim countries unable to become fully educated or to live as independent autonomous people. Islam is the only religion today in which women are stoned for adultery in the same archaic manner they were in the sixth century, a punishment blamed on the Jews for setting the precedent. This is not the seal of a text revealed by God, but the mark of a man imposing a social order based on his own personal interpretations of conditions in the sixth century. To suggest it is a divine work of God is bibliolatry.

At first Muhammad lived in peace with the people of Mecca, but when he decided that his verses accepting the three goddesses as intermediaries were a heresy spawned by satanic influence, and began to preach a more firebrand monotheism, this offended the sensibilities of the Quraysh of Mecca and he ended up having to escape to Medina with a small band of followers. There was a large Jewish community at Medina occupying an entire sector of the walled oasis settlement. Many Jews had settled in Arabia from the time of the Roman diaspora. However Muhammad found his new Arab religion, cast in the model of the Jewish heritage, was not respected by the Jews of Medina. Ostensibly, in response to this perceived insult, Muhammad turned the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca.

Fig 30: The genocide at Medina
Traditional illustration from Fitna - The Movie

The situation soured and finally turned to genocide when the Quraysh, angered by his disruptive influence, laid siege to Medina. The plight in the oasis became
desperate. Not knowing which side would eventually win, the Jews sent a party to parley with the Quraysh to try to preserve themselves from being overrun by one side or the other. But then in a superstitious misjudgment, the Quraysh deserted the siege when a severe desert storm struck the region. Fearing the Jews might have opened their gates to the enemy. According to Karen Armstrong’s “Muhammad” p 206, the prophet appointed a mortally wounded fighter as judge over their fates, causing a Muslim friend of the Jews to draw his finger over his throat to warn them of their impending fate. Seven hundred Jewish men were taken down to the souk and beheaded in an unmitigated genocide. The women and children were taken into slavery. I say unmitigated because the Jewsnever actually betrayed the Muslims and never did open their gates, so there was no excuse and no valid rationalization for this slaughter.

Karen Armstrong notes: *It is probably impossible for us to dissociate this story from Nazi atrocities and it will inevitably alienate many people irrevocably from Muhammad. But Western scholars like Maxime Rodinson and W. Montgomery Watt argue that it is not correct to judge the incident by twentieth-century standards. But the problem is that in the 21st century these genocidal standards are still legitimized and applied by Muslims today.*

This slaughter and slavery is used as a spiritual justification for IS to commit genocide on Yazidi men and take Yasdi and other women as slaves even to their children in a case of crimes against humanity by demographic rape.

The Islamic State group said it enslaved families from the minority Yazidi sect after overrunning their villages in northwestern Iraq, in what it praised as the revival of an ancient custom of using women and children as spoils of war. The ancient custom of enslavement had fallen out of use because of deviation from true Islam, but was revived when fighters overran Yazidi villages in Iraq’s Sinjar region. “After capture, the Yazidi women and children were then divided according to the Shariah amongst the fighters of the Islamic State who participated in the Sinjar operations, after one fifth of the slaves were transferred to the Islamic State’s authority to be divided as khums [a traditional tax on the spoils of war]. This large-scale enslavement of mushrik (idolator) families is probably the first since the abandonment of Shariah law.”

Dabiq magazine, an IS vehicle, tries to justify this profligate enslavement as a sign of the Day of Resurrection, condemning mothers to become slaves even to their own offspring: “This interpretation is like the one before it, indicating that one of the signs of the Hour is the increased conquests and bringing in of slaves from the lands of kufr. It has also been stated that the meaning of the slave girl giving birth to her master is that people turn away from marriage sufficing with concubines alone. And Allah knows best” [Fathul-Bârî]. Ibn Rajab also said, “This indicates the conquest of lands and the high occurrence of taking slaves until concubines and their children increase in numbers. The slave girl becomes a slave to her master while his children have the status of her master over herself. This is because the child of the master has the rank of the master, and thereby the child of the slave girl has the status of her owner and master” [Jāmi’ al-Ulûm wal-Hikam]. An-Nawawi explained the hadith by saying, “The majority of scholars say that this foretells the increase of concubines and their children in numbers, because the child of a concubine has the status of her master” [Sharh Sahîh Muslim].

The genocide at Medina comes on top of a grisly sequence of episodes of religious war in the Arabian peninsula. In 522, King Dhu Nawas Yusaf ”Lord of Curlys” laid siege to Christian Najran further south. Up to 2000 Christians of Narayan were burned alive, allegedly when he offered them Jewry or death, just as Muslims have done, in conversion by the sword, over succeeding centuries. He was in turn killed when a Christian army from Ethiopia, supported by Byzantium, overthrew him and for a time Christian Saba became a rival to Mecca. Then the Persians invaded and made the peninsula a satrapy.

The genocide at Najran is allegedly referred to in the Quran, so Muhammad knew of it as a precedent:

*Doomed be the makers of the ditch, who lit the fuel-fed fire and sat around it, to watch what they were doing to the believers (85:4).*  

But none of these events are an excuse for Muhammad's genocidal actions. Muhammad is cut as a divine prophet, indeed the final prophet, so that any other who would make the claim receives the death penalty, yet he committed a needless genocide in error. This is the mark of a brutal general, not a man of religious insight. The Jews neither betrayed the Muslims nor did they make war on them, or history would have played out very differently.. It is this slaughter that ever since has given the justification for Muslim genocides of people of other faiths. It is directly Muhammad's folly and was a homicidal misjudgment because, in the end, he never had to pursue a final military battle with the Quraysh.
The history of Islam then moves on to the Treaty of Hudaybiyah where Muhammad cited the principle of peace, or tranquility, sakina when meeting an opponent too strong to defeat at the time, only to abrogate it later:

\[
\text{He it is Who sent down the Sakina into the hearts of the believers that they might add faith unto their faith.}
\]

Sakina is an expression again echoing Jewish tradition in the form of the Shekhinah or indwelling feminine face of God. However for Muhammad, citing sakina is not really suing for peace but just for a temporary peace treaty that he intended to overthrow later in ultimate victory. In three distinct passages in the Qur'an, at Hudaybiyah (48:4), under the tree (48:18), and in the cave (9:40), where tranquility enables Abu Bakr and Muhammad, hiding in the cave, to avoid capture only later to regroup in greater strength in Medina, sakina is associated with another concept, takiya, the right to hide the truth, so as to ultimately defeat your enemy in religious victory when you are stronger.

\[
\text{Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down the sakina on them and rewarded them with a speedy victory.}
\]

The early Islamic historian al-Bukhari noted that al-Hasan, the son of Ali and Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, said the Tuqyah, or deceptive outward behaviour, continues to the end of days:

\[
\text{The Tuqyah is allowed until the Day of Resurrection.}
\]

Al-Ghazali notes:

\[
\textit{it is permissible to lie if attaining the goal is permissible... and obligatory to lie if the goal is obligatory.}
\]

Muhammad abrogated the ten-year Treaty of Hudaybiyah after two-years under the pretext that a tribe the Bakr associated with the Quraysh, were sworn enemies of the Khuza'ah who had sided with Muhammad and violence had broken out. Muhammad assembled an army and marched on Mecca with an assembly so great that resistance was futile. Pivotally Abu Sufyan who was the husband of Hind-al-Hunud a very prominent tribal warrior queen whose clan had repeatedly fought the Muslims, met them agreed to persuade the people of Mecca to accept the Muslim his shelter in return for guaranteeing their lives in the event the Muslim army entered and attacked Mecca. In the event this enabled the Muslims to march into Mecca unopposed except for the peripheral skirmish.

Ending the period of religious tolerance, Muhammad smashed all the icons in the Ka'aba, leaving only the portraits of Jesus and Mary and ironically, the vagina-like meteoric Black Stone, the most sacrosanct symbol of the old religion. Likewise the images of al-Uzza and Manat and a year later also those of al-Lat at Taif, were destroyed, although the people there initially resisted and raised an army leading to an indecisive siege. Although Muhammad issued an amnesty to those who accepted his rule, a list of prominent opponents were summarily executed. Within two and a half years, Muhammad would pass away. Nawal el Sadaawi in "The Hidden Face of Eve" notes the effect on women who opposed Muhammad's rule:

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\textit{Sarah was a famous slave singer who aimed her barbed words against the Moslems. She was among those whom Mahomet ordered to be executed on the day of his victorious entry into Mecca. In the region of El Nagir, it was recounted that some women had rejoiced when the Prophet died and Abu Bake, the first of the Caliphs, ordered their hands and feet to be cut off. Thus women who dared to give voice to their protest or opposition could be exposed to cruel punishment. Their hands might be cut off, or their teeth pulled out, or their tongues torn from their mouths. This last form of punishment was usually reserved for those who were singers. It was said of these women that they used to dye their hands with henna, brazenly display the seductions of their beauty, and beat time with their fingers on tambourines and drums in defiance of God, and in derision towards the rights of God and his Prophet. It was therefore necessary to cut off their hands and tear out their tongues.}
\]

Muhammad was particularly unforgiving to anyone who ridiculed him or his Quranic verses. According to al-Tabari's Alseera Al Nabawiya (2:463) Muhammad explicitly ordered the murder of Om Kerfa (Mother of Kerfa), one of the most revered Meccan matriarchs, who was torn in half by camels at the age of ninety:

*She is Fatima daughter of Rabia son of Badir son of Amru al Fazari. Mother of Kerfa married a prince of the tribe of Hathifa
and bore for him 13 children the first of whom was Kerfa by whom she is surnamed. All her children became leaders of their tribes. She was the dearest of all Arabs, and an example of honor and pride to them. It was said if two tribes fought and Mother of Kerfa sent her scholl on a spear that was displayed to both parties, then they would reconcile out of respect for her. She used to annoy the prophet with her poetry so in the sixth year of the Hijra he sent Zaid son of Haritha on a military expedition to kill her in the most heinous of ways. For he tied her legs with ropes and tied each of the ropes to a camel so that she was split in two. She was an old woman when this happened and her head was severed as proof to all that she had died."

Each ancient temple was demolished or burned to the ground, and the priests and priestesses put to the sword. Nabih Faris in "The Book of Idols" notes that when the banu-Umahmah were slaughtered and the women debased for defending dhu-al-Khalasah which stood half way to San'a, a woman cried

The banu-Umahmah, each wielding his spear, Were slaughtered at al-Waliyah, their abode; They came to defend their shrine only to find Lions with brandished swords clamouring for blood. The women of Khath'am were then humiliated by the men of Ahmas and debased.

Faris notes that it is said by al-Bukhari that the Prophet himself, acknowledging this, said:

This world shall not pass away until the buttocks of the women of Daws wiggle [again] around the dhu-al-Khalasah and they worship it as they were want to do [before Islam].

The Quran specifies a veil only for Muhammad's wives although there are general admonitions to modesty (24:30), asking women to draw their khimar over their bosoms and not display their beauty to unrelated men (24:31), to cast their outer garments over their persons in public (33:58) and not make a dazzling display like that of the former times of ignorance (33:32), confirming a patriarchal shift from the older Goddess traditions. Geraldine Brooks in "Nine Parts of Desire" notes that the passage on veiling the prophet's wives came after a controversial marriage to one of Muhammad's nine wives Zeinab, who was originally the wife of his son-in-law Zaid, who agreed to divorce her for the prophet's sake. Muhammad then recited the verses on his wedding night after he became impatient with guests lingering, delaying his consummation of his sexual union:

And when you ask his wives for anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain (33:53).

Upon Muhammad's death, the rule passed on to highly repressive misogynistic rulers. Veiling and sequestering of women became mandatory. Stoning for adultery was made official. Geraldine Brooks comments:

And much worse was coming. Repression of women was about to be legislated into the religion on a large scale by Abu Bakr's successor as caliph, the violent misogynist Omar. That Aisha supported Omar's bid for leadership shows the depth
of her loathing for Fatima's husband, Ali. Her opinion of Omar was not high. Knowing his cruelty to the women of his household, she had cleverly helped foil a match between him and her sister. Omar cracked down on women in ways that he must have known flouted Muhammad's traditions. He made stoning the official punishment for adultery and pressed to extend the seclusion of women beyond the prophet's wives. He tried to prevent women from praying in the mosque, and when that failed, he ordered separate prayer leaders for men and women. He also prevented women from making the Hajj, a ban that was lifted only in the last year of his life.

Fig 31: Left: Burying for stoning. Right: A woman stoned dead in her hole (Mazar-i-Sharif).

The same archaic attitudes of violence obvious in the genocide at Medina apply to punishments such as stoning. The Hadith say Muhammad ordered stoning and himself performed it and that it was somehow accidentally left out of the Quran, which specifies only flogging, ostensibly because it was written on a note which Aisha had under her pillow along with the provision on breastfeeding adults and a goat ate it when Muhammad died (Ibn Majah 3:9:1944). In two accounts in the Hadith Muhammad forced Jews against their will to have a couple stoned for adultery because of the old Deuteronomic curse:

Jews came to the Prophet and said, "A man and a woman of our nation have committed adultery." The Prophet asked them, "What does the Torah says about pelting stones?" They replied, "We humiliate them and give publicly to their evil act and punish them by flogging." Abdullah bin Salam said, "You are telling a lie. Bring the Torah which also ordains pelting stones." So they brought the Torah and one of them having covered his hand the verse relating to the pelting of stones read out the verse preceding it and the verse after it. Abdullah bin Salam said, "Take off your hand." And the verse about pelting stones was seen clearly. The Jew said, "Abdullah bin Salam is right. The verse about pelting stones is there." Then the Prophet directed that both the committers of adultery be stoned to death and they met their fate (Bukhari 2:23:413, 4:56:829).

Both stoning for adultery and death for apostasy appear in Deuteronomy (22:24 and 13:10), but in 30AD, the Sanhedrin effectively abolished capital punishment, making it a hypothetical upper limit on the severity of punishment, fitting in finality for God alone to use, not fallible humans. Muhammad's malicious use of Deuteronomy to invoke cruel, archaic and homicidal punishments, over 1000 years after the text was allegedly discovered in dubious circumstances during a temple reconstruction in the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22), and 600 years after Jewish death penalties were quashed, has become a 1400 year long crime against humanity.

Fig 31b: Muhammad married Aisha at the age of nine, cementing a Muslim tradition for child marriage. Both Ayatollah Khomeini and the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia have claimed marriage to prepubescent girls is acceptable. Afghani child marriage: Roshan Qasem, 11, joins Said Mohammed, 55, his first wife; three sons, and a daughter the same age as her.

Subsequently Islam has used jihad as holy war to justify military invasion, the summary homicide of people who follow other beliefs and will not submit to becoming Muslims - conversion by the sword, as well as a raft of archaic tribal laws in sharia, including stoning women for infidelity or even entering a relationship outside
marriage, amputation of limbs for felony, and whiplashing for a variety of minor offenses. The only exceptions for the death penalty for infidels who would not convert were the people of the book, comprising Jews, Christians and ironically the astral worshipping Sabeans, but these remained second class citizens having to pay a poll tax for not being within the Muslim fold. The lure of martyrdom, which remains hauntingly strong in both Sunni and Shia sects, which divided over the martyrdom of Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law Ali, is a direct transposition of Yeshua’s own demise, which has been enshrined in Muslim scripture, as if he felt no pain in ascending straight to heaven. When Muslim terrorists blow themselves, and a host of innocent people along with them to pieces, we can thus thank Jesus and his all-too-reckless demise, for the carnage and destruction. Would-be martyrs are reassured that as the blessed they will see the face of God, and enter a paradise in which 72 black eyed houris made virgins anew every day, will wait on them hand and foot.

The lessons are twofold. The invocation to jihad or holy war, sometimes depicted as the right to endless religious struggle to victory, is a violent religious misjudgment that never resulted in an actual military victory for Muhammad and his followers, but a despicable unnecessary genocide at Muhammad’s own contrivance. It has been used ever since the time of Muhammad to justify slaughter of unbelievers in the name of religion, conversion by the sword and other atrocities. Secondly the claim that Islam is a religion of peace is the calculated lie of takiya in operation. Islam has a utopian agenda of world domination. It divides the world between the region of submission (Islam means submission to God) and the region of war - dar al harb. It seeks a monolith of the Qu’ran as revealed scripture, sharia as law and the Islamic state as society, rejecting all principles of the democratic right of choice of the people. It is legitimate to force conversion under penalty of death and apostasy likewise faces the death penalty. No religion which enforces utopian aims by homicidal violence is a religion of peace, nor is it a religion of the god one can claim created the natural universe.

But these errors of violence are not just limited to Islam, they permeate all major religious traditions, so in section 10 we examine how founding religious cosmologies and social constructs threaten the future of humanity in the closing circle of the biosphere.

8: Syncretic Monotheism and Cultural Evolution

Some of the most striking evidence for the cultural evolution of deity comes from existing syncretic religions that are nevertheless monotheistic and incorporate key elements of avowedly monotheistic religions in a creative way that mixes highly disparate beliefs in a way which is clearly the mark of cultural innovation. Both of the Alawites and Yazidis incorporate descriptions of disobedience to the divine that fundamentally alter the entire cosmology of monotheistic belief. The Alawites have to undergo repeated reincarnation to regain their heavenly place, while the Yazidis worship a remorseful fallen angel identified by traditional Muslims as Satan.

Alawites consider themselves to be Twelver Shi‘ite Muslims, although some Sunnis dispute that they are Muslims at all. Their doctrine incorporates Gnostic, neo-Platonic, Islamic, Christian and Vedanta-like beliefs. Their theology is based on a trinity - three emanations of one God: the supreme aspect, "Essence" or "Meaning", and two lesser emanations - "Name", or "Veil"; and "Gate". These emanations have manifested themselves in different human forms over several cycles in history, the last cycle of which was as Ali (Essence), Muhammad (Name) and Salman the Persian (Gate).

However in a Vedanta-like twist Alawites also hold that they were originally stars, or divine lights, that were cast out of heaven through disobedience and must undergo repeated reincarnation before returning to heaven. They can be reincarnated as Christians, or others, through sin, and as animals if they become infidels.

Fig 32: Yazidi women light candles and torches outside Lalesh temple during a ceremony to
Yazdani theology, of the Yazidis consists of an absolute transcendental God (Haq) encompassing the universe, binding together the cosmos with his essence, which manifests as the heft sirr (seven angels or gods), who sustain universal life and can incarnate in persons as avatars. These seven emanations are comparable to the seven Anunnaki aspects of Anu of ancient Mesopotamian theology. Anu is the high god of the heavens, king of gods, spirits and demons. He had the power to judge those who had committed crimes, and that he had created the stars as soldiers to destroy the wicked. He was one of the oldest gods in the Sumerian pantheon, in a triad with Enlil and Enki, gods of air and water.

The Yazdani emanations include Melek Taus ("Peacock Angel" or "King") who is also the ancient Sumerian god Dumuzi son of Enki and the main deity in Yazidi theology, and Shaykh Shams al-Din, "sun of the faith", who is Mithra. The Peacock Angel, as world-ruler, causes both good and bad to befall individuals, and this ambivalent character is reflected in myths of his own temporary fall from God's favor, before his remorseful tears extinguished the fires of his hellish prison and he was reconciled with God. This belief builds on Sufi mystical reflections on the angel Iblis, who proudly refused to violate monotheism by worshipping Adam and Eve despite God's express command to do so.

Because of the association with Iblis, some followers of other monotheistic religions of the region equate the Peacock Angel with Satan, which has incited centuries of persecution of the Yazidis as "devil worshippers." Persecution of Yazidis has continued in their home communities within the borders of modern Iraq, under both Saddam Hussein and fundamentalist Sunni Muslim revolutionaries. In August 2014 the Yazidis were targeted by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in its campaign to "purify" Iraq and neighboring countries of non-Islamic influences.

9: Insights and Contradictions of Vedantic, Jain and Buddhist Traditions

Hinduism is as ancient a tradition as the Judeo-Christian tradition and carries with it a long and uniquely complex history, running from the mingling of the Vedas of the Aryan invaders with the older Dravidian planter cultures of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, with the archetypes of Shiva and Kali. This intermingling has been succeeded by diverse overlays of Vishnavite, Shaiwite and Shakti traditions embracing many deities along with their consorts, leading to the Upanishads, the Jains and the emergence of Buddhism as a second-generation universal religion, in a parallel with the emergence of Christianity out of the Hebrew religion. The critical difference is that Hinduism, while remaining an ethnic religion of a culture of diverse peoples, has retained its polytheistic diversity, although followers of a given sect may give devotions to one deity in a form of monolatry.

In many ways the Hindu tradition acts as a mirror to tacit assumptions of monotheism, such as the falsity of idolatry. The fact that the deities are diverse and that they have an iconic form does not make them false or hollow deities, because the iconic form is merely a representation of a deeper underlying abstract, metaphorical and spiritual meaning. Moreover each of the diverse deities represent fundamental aspects of reality without discrediting their power or universality. This relationship has allowed all the diverse practices and practitioners of various Hindu traditions to coexist without having to resort to the divisive invective that has plagued the monotheistic tradition and marred its cultural diversity.
This is not to say that Hindu religion is innocent either, for we know the Bhagavad-Gita is an unmitigated incitement to holy war, with Krishna inciting Arjuna to kill his relatives:

*The Lord said: My beloved friend! Why yield, just on the eve of battle, to this weakness which does no credit to those who call themselves Aryans, and only brings them infamy and bars against them the gates of heaven? O Arjuna! Why give way to unmanliness? O thou who art the terror of thine enemies! Shake off such shameful effeminacy, make ready to act!*

**Fig 34:** Krishna & Arjuna blowing their conch shells.

*Arjuna argued: My Lord! How can I, when the battle rages, send an arrow through Bheeshma and Drona, who should receive my reverence? Rather would I content myself with a beggar's crust that kill these teachers of mine, these precious noble souls! To slay these masters who are my benefactors would be to stain the sweetness of life's pleasures with their blood. Nor can I say whether it were better that they conquer me or for me to conquer them, since I would no longer care to live if I killed these sons of Dhritarashtra, now preparing for fight.*

*Lord Shri Krishna said: Why grieve for those for whom no grief is due, and yet profess wisdom? The wise grieve neither for the dead nor the living. There was never a time when I was not, nor thou, nor these princes were not; there will never be a time when we shall cease to be. As the soul experiences in this body infancy, youth and old age, so finally it passes into another. The wise have no delusion about this. Those external relations which bring cold and heat, pain and happiness, they come and go; they are not permanent. Endure them bravely, O Prince! The hero whose soul is unmoved by circumstance, who accepts pleasure and pain with equanimity, only he is fit for immortality.*

However the justification is very different from the simplistic moral imperative of waging holy war to force onto others submission to the one ‘true’ god. Krishna is telling Arjuna that you can commit holy war even against your own kin, because all material lives are transitory and only the immortal soul within us is eternal. Thus we can even martyr ourselves in our pursuit to kill our opponents because all sentient beings are reincarnated, as their eternal souls pass through transient living bodies.

Hindu tradition is guilty of throwing its widows on the funeral pyre in a patriarchal cult of homicide and a host of other extremities, from the devotees at Puri throwing themselves to be crushed under the wheels of Jaganath’s juggernaut, to human sacrifice to Kali. That said, the Vedantic tradition contains some of the deepest insights into the nature of conscious and spiritual reality so far discovered on the planet.

The story of Vishnu, the sustainer, in deep meditative repose, dreaming the universe out of Brahma, the unchanging reality amidst and beyond the world - *sat-cit-ananda*, or being-consciousness-bliss - springing as a lotus out of his navel, overlooked by his complement and consort, Lakshmi, the goddess of love, and good fortune in life, is a penetrating insight into the nature of the conscious and material universe.

**Fig 35:** Vishnu dreams the universe through the navel lotus of Brahma, overlooked by Lakshmi.

The earliest Upanishads date from 900 to 600 BC. The fundamental concern of the Upanishads is the nature of reality. They teach the identity of the individual soul (atman) with the universal essence soul [Brahman]. Because they are the final portions of the Vedas, they are also known as Vedanta, - the end of the Vedas - and their thought, as
interpreted in succeeding centuries, is likewise known as Vedanta. Once again we see the strong emphasis on killing and being killed being just part of transience, while the eternal atman residing within us, communed with through abandoning oneself to deep meditation, is the same eternal self beyond joy and sorrow that is both at our inner source and the deity which pervades the universe:

*Death said: “The word the Vedas extol, austerities proclaim, sanctities approach - that word is Om. That word is eternal Spirit, eternal distance, who knows it attains to his desire. How can the killing of the body kill Him? He who thinks that He kills, he who thinks that He is killed, is ignorant. He does not kill nor is He killed. The Self is lesser than the least, greater than the greatest. He lives in all hearts. When senses are at rest, free from desire, man finds Him and mounts beyond sorrow. Though sitting, He travels; though sleeping is everywhere. Who but I Death can understand that God is beyond joy and sorrow. Who knows the Self, bodiless among the embodied, unchanging among the changing, prevalent everywhere, goes beyond sorrow. He comes to the man He loves; takes that man’s body for His own.”* (Katha Upanishad 1:2)

The earliest scriptural references to reincarnation date back to the Rig Veda:

*Burn him not up, nor quite consume him, Agni: let not his body or his skin be scattered. O Jatavedas, when thou hast matured him, then send him on his way unto the Fathers... let thy fierce flame, thy glowing splendour, burn him With thine auspicious forms, o Jatavedas, bear this man to the region of the pious... Again, O Agni, to the Fathers send him who, offered in thee, goes with our oblations. Wearing new life let him increase his offspring: let him rejoin a body, Jatavedas.*

The middle of the first millennium BC saw a rich radiation of spiritual traditions in India leading to the Vedantic tradition of religious philosophy, Jainism and Buddhism.

Mahavira the founder of the Jain tradition shared many of the same principles of renunciation and meditation but also contained ecological and social principles that define its uniqueness. He taught that every living being has sanctity and dignity and it should be respected just as we do our own - that we should show maximum possible kindness to every living being. That goodness comes from being respectful and truthful and gaining freedom from desires. He also preached social equanimity that the strong and the rich should not try to exploit the weak and the poor because it results in unfair distribution of wealth and hence poverty. That social peace, security and an enlightened society needs to come from within the goodness of people, because attempting to enforce virtue by an external and legal authority leads to hypocrisy and criminal intrigue.

Buddhism forms a cultural leap from the Upanishadic notion of the cosmic self, to a cosmology in which the atman is an illusion, because all forms of objectification are samsara, or illusion. Rather there is just the cycle of birth and death causing sentient beings to suffer the entrapments of the grasping ego. By renouncing worldly desires and attachments that are the cause of suffering, one can reach a state of contemplation where one can escape the cycle of birth and death and become one with nirvana the Buddha mind or rather, no mind, since the still point of the turning world of transient phenomena cannot be objectified or conceptualized.

Key to this notion is a theme that is shared with the Vedantic and Jain traditions, namely that the consciousness of sentient beings is the central eternal reality and that nature and its diversity of natural life forms, from humans and animals to plants and bacteria, is just a collection of transient phenomena, part of the great cycle of reincarnation, with an overarching moral causality, in which those who behave ignorantly are karmically destined to be reborn as a lower life form, setting back their long journey to enlightenment.

Reincarnation, transmigration of the souls or metempsychosis is a notion that has pervaded aspects of both Western and Eastern cultures. It is an attempt to rationalize the notion of an eternal soul with the transient affairs of a changing world of mortal beings. Like the eternal afterlife and Day of resurrection, it envisages an eternal cosmology extending beyond the visible physical world, however rather than a linear moral causality it has become a cyclic one.
Both these cosmologies have manifest problems of credibility of a purely mathematical nature. If the soul is eternal and reincarnation does not take place, as in the monotheistic view, heaven and hell will in the end become flooded with an essentially infinite number of sentient beings in a kind of multiverse in which everything happens and there is no real distinction. On the other hand, if reincarnation is the rule, we have to explain how an essentially fixed collection of eternal souls can be threaded through an essentially infinite number of transient incarnations, some of which may leave the souls so transfixed that all opportunity for moral growth might never occur.

Buddhism, particularly in its Tibetan form, extends the cycle of life into an ornate cosmology of samsara, consisting of heaven, human and animal worlds, purgatories and hell surrounding the human cycle of birth and death. Reincarnation can now occur into any one of six realms, one of which is the human realm as we know it, complemented by the god or deva realm of heavenly bliss; the jealous god or demi-god realm, more pleasant then the world of men, but plagued by jealousy for the devas; the animal realm plagued by strong emotions and ignorance; the hungry ghost, or preta, realm, where urgent desires can never be satisfied; and a hell realm where anger becomes like burning fire until the ‘soul’ is purified. In all honesty we should admit that this entire cosmology is an illusion. It is clearly a purely subjective world-view, since the human and animal realms are both part of the natural world, but are pictured incorrectly as distinct. Although Buddhism is nominally atheist in terms of a creator deity, the world becomes populated with heavenly beings such as devas and dakinis, and beings which devotees worship in the same manner as deities, such as Kannon the Goddess of Compassion, so it is also polytheistic.

So although we embark on a deep journey of meditative exploration of the conscious existential condition in the Upanishads, in Buddhism, this is harnessed to a moral causality as inflexible as the moral imperatives of monotheism and as fantastic and unnatural as the illusory heaven, hell and purgatory of the Day of Judgment. Although overcoming attachments that trouble the ego is fundamentally sound psychological sense, the Buddhist cosmology, makes no sense naturally and is another manifestation of patriarchal mind-sky religion in which nature is subjugated to sentient consciousness, to become mere grist for the mill wheel of sentient beings.

There are many other possible conscious incarnation patterns that could be experienced as more fluid versions of the reincarnation principle. A more fluid theory, which I would call ‘topological reincarnation’ goes as follows: Our individual incarnate consciousness is a constrained dynamic of universal consciousness effectively bonded into one organism in the form of a bundle of associations to do with the ego and survival of the organism. As the bundle of the individual consciousness becomes loosened as these constraints are released through meditation, visionary states or near death experiences, the dynamic of individual consciousness begins to merge with universal consciousness. We experience this merging with cosmic consciousness as moksha, nirvana or samadhi. Effectively individual consciousness merges with cosmic consciousness at death. The cosmic soul is eternal. Individual consciousness is an outgrowth from it so is of immortal origin but responding to a transient incarnation.

There is no wheel of moral causality. We do not become reincarnated as insects. In fact we don’t become
reincarnated at all but merge with the totality of being. There is a state of cosmic consciousness, which extends throughout space-time and is at some level aware of us and especially as we become aware of it. Moral rules become superfluous, because, once one realizes how individual consciousness flows with cosmic consciousness, we have no need or desire to pursue selfish ends, because our brief time in incarnate existence is our chance to make the world a better place. It is this opportunity for cosmic consciousness to witness reality and help bring it into fullness of being that IS our life experience of doing this.

![Fig 37: Left: Buddhist heaven, The Pure Land of Bliss, is a highly ordered paradise of unending meditations. Right: Buddhist hell, Amanohashidate Japan, is tumultuous demonic chaos.](image)

Although Jainism reveres all living creatures and many branches of Buddhism, such as Japanese Zen, stress closeness to nature and communion with it, in the attainment of satori - seeing into one's true nature - perhaps when viewing a lotus, or a cherry blossom, in a temple garden, both essentially treat all life forms simply as sentient beings of equal value regardless of their ecological rarity or value or the differing implications for the diversity and robustness of life’s future. When faced with a weasel threatening a rare bird, their world views remain a mind-sky one of two reincarnating sentient beings of equal value, failing to comprehend that the tree of life’s diversity hangs in the balance for the bird and that protecting it, even if it means controlling the burgeoning population of its invasive predators, is of paramount importance to the future of life.

![Fig 38: Above: Huitzilopochtli and blood sacrifice Codex Magliabechiano. Below: Conquistador massacre of the heathen musicians Diego Duran.](image)

10: Meso-American Religions of Blood Sacrifice

Despite Christianity’s own fields of blood stemming from God sacrificing his only begotten Son in the crucifixion, continuing with mass martyrdom, crusades, and the endless Eucharistic consumption of Christ’s flesh and blood, conquistadors, in the face of wholesale Aztec sacrificial practices, were dismayed and driven to barbarism, repressing even simple musical celebrations with dismemberment, when to the conquistadors chagrin, the Aztecs perceived in their conquerors’ religion, the same blood-thirsty imperatives as their own. This gives us a final insight into the deranged imperatives of prescriptive religion.

In Aztec cosmology, death was necessary in the perpetuation of creation, and gods and humans alike had the responsibility of sacrificing themselves in order to allow life to continue. This worldview is best described in the myth of the five suns in which the first four were destroyed until by an act of self-sacrifice one of the gods caused a fifth and final sun to rise where the first humans,
made out of maize dough, could live thanks to his sacrifice. Humans were responsible for the sun’s continued revival. Blood sacrifice in various forms human and animal were conducted including auto-sacrifice through self-mutilation. The priest (tlamacazqui "giver of things") made sure that the gods were given their due in the form of offerings, ceremonies and sacrifices. Human sacrifice was practiced on a grand scale throughout the Aztec empire. At Tenochtitlán, the principal Aztec city, according to Hassig (2003 El sacrificio y las guerras floridas Arqueología mexicana XI: 47) "between 10,000 and 80,400 persons" were sacrificed over the course of four days for the dedication of the Great Pyramid in 1487, although some have claimed this gross scale of sacrifice was made more humane by the use of intoxicants and hallucinogenic species such as sacred mushrooms.

At an opposite extreme to monotheism however, the Aztecs practiced an extremely promiscuous form of polytheism, adopting the deities of previous and neighbouring cultures such as the more ancient Toltecs without distinction. In addition to their own warrior god Huitzilopochtli "Left-handed Hummingbird", the tribal God of Tenochtitlan, identified with the Sun, they had several principal pan-mesoamerican deities including Quetzalcoatl "Feathered Serpent", god of life, the wind and the morningstar; Tlaloc god of rainstorm, water, thunder and storm; and Tezcatlipoca "Smoking Mirror", shaman God, omnipotent universal power. In addition they had many diverse gods and goddesses of nature, fertility, creation, excess and trade, such as Xochipilli - "Flower Prince", god of happiness, flowers, pleasure and fertility, many of which could transform identities, just as priests and sacrificial victims would don the personae of the deities in ritual festivals.

The Aztec universe consisted of the Earth including the mythical origin of human beings, a nine-layered underworld of the dead (Mictlan "place of death") also inhabited by deities and mythical beings, and the thirteen-layered heavenly sky realm impenetrable to humans, except for the lowest layer. Existence was a cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. The sun was believed to dwell in the underworld at night to rise reborn in the morning, so the human and divine existence was also envisioned as cyclical. The lowest layer of the sky was Tlalocan ("the place of Tlaloc") a paradisiacal realm of unending springtime, with an abundance of green foliage and edible plants of the region After death the soul of the Aztec went to one of three places. Souls of fallen warriors and women who died in childbirth would transform into hummingbirds that followed the Sun on its journey through the sky. Souls of people who died from less glorious causes would go to Mictlan. Those who drowned would go to Tlalocan.

The Aztec also practiced stoning for adultery. Friar Sahagun, one of the first conquistadors to chronicle teonanacatl, flesh of the gods, a genuine visionary sacrament, by ironic contrast with the purely symbolic yet bloodthirsty flesh and blood soma and sangre of the Eucharist, remarked of the Aztec sacred mushroom eaters:
'When they become excited by them start dancing, singing, weeping. Some do not want to sing but sit down and see themselves dying in a vision; others see themselves being eaten by a wild beast; others imagine they are capturing prisoners of war, that they are rich, that they possess many slaves, that they have committed adultery and were to have their heads crushed for the offence . . . and when the drunken state had passed, they talk over amongst themselves the visions they have seen' (Furst P “Flesh of the Gods” p7).

Yet, for all this, the after-life was not one condemned to eternal suffering for one's sins, as in the diabolical monotheistic cosmologies. The journey from the first level of Mictlan to the ninth was difficult and took four years, and the dead, aided by the psychopomp, Xolotl had to pass many challenges, such as crossing a mountain range where the mountains crashed into each other, a field with wind that blew flesh-scraping knives, and a river of blood with fearsome jaguars, eventually they could reach the uppermost level which was also identified with the paradise of Tlalocan the lowest layer of the heavens.

Fig 41: The evolutionary diversity of life as a mandala and as a tree of genetic variation. This is the most complex and only conscious system we know of in the universe and our religions need to respect it as a primary source of inspiration and adapt to cherish and replenish it.

11: Religious Violation of Nature, Sexuality, Morality and Consciousness

We need to have a skeptical attitude to the claims of religions, paralleling the skeptical principle in science that requires one to demonstrate a phenomenon occurs, or a law is obeyed, in nature before a theory can be validated. Newton overturned the notion that moving objects always came to rest, showing conservation of energy meant conservation of momentum unless an external force was applied. Einstein found Newton’s laws of motion broke down as we accelerated to the speed of light and the model of reality had to embrace relativity, and in succession, quantum theory. It is these changes of paradigm that characterize scientific discovery that
we urgently need to apply to religious paradigms.

We have seen that a very broad spread of religions introduce ideas that are in frank violation of nature. The sabbatical creation for all its innocence and metaphorical beauty completely fails to accurately describe observable aspects of nature. Day and night are created as sentient illumination before and separately from the Sun and Moon, which are just set as lamps in the heavens after the plants are already in existence, complete with their seed-bearing fruit. This is fine for a flat-earth creation myth, but we need to observe Paul’s admonition to stop behaving like little children, and come to see reality face to face, no longer through the dark glass of end of days religious imperatives, but enlightened with scientific objectivity and subjective visionary experience:

\[
\text{When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child:} \\
\text{but when I became a man, I put away childish things} \\
\text{For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face:} \\
\text{now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Cor 13:11).}
\]

Indeed, if humanity is to be appointed as having dominion over all life, this is a position of responsible guardianship to cherish and replenish the Earth, to dress it and keep it in all its verdant living diversity and not rape the planet out of either our own short-term selfish expedience, or a misguided and coercive set of religious principles in which nature becomes a debased and defiled realm.

But the monotheistic traditions pursue an altogether more sinister violation of nature. They are desert religions, which despite harking back to the paradise of Eden and blaming humanity for the Fall, proceed towards a Day of Judgment in which the wholesale desecration and destruction of nature is envisaged as our cosmic destiny accompanied by a mass extinction of all life, not just human life and pretensions. Even if much of the polemic of Revelation is ascribed to be political polemic against heathen ruling powers, from Babylon to Rome, the entire cosmological thrust is triage to the point of genocide in the name of a vengeful god, and in the Christian context of his now become feudal lord of a son. At an extreme, a rapture is invoked, by traditional Christians and Gnostic heretics alike, in which the entirety of planetary nature and life, created either by God or the flawed demiurge, is discarded as a meaningless husk in the pursuit of heavenly redemption.

There are many forms of psychosis have been described in medical literature, from paranoid schizophrenia, through manic depression to psychopathic personality, but none of them hold a candle to the demented episodes that are sanctified as unquestioning works of God, from Judges through the Gospels and Revelation to the Quran. In any worldly setting humans despite their expedience and greed can identify crimes against humanity, or the wider diversity of life, and find them abhorrent, but in the case of these religious texts, somehow all standards of ethics and compassion for life are set aside. A good share of this is blindness towards bibliolatry. A refusal to admit that, if the prophets decried idol worship as empty and powerless, the same slavish clinging to religious scripture as divinely dictated truth, is equally empty and degenerate.

But there is a deeper fundamental reason for this and that is that religions are social systems of a very worldly nature which hijack the visionary experiences of their prophetic founders to produce totalitarian and coercive belief systems designed to pursue a moral imperative and sexist demographic agenda to ensure the dominance and ultimate supremacy of the religion. This classes religions as cultural epidemic diseases that live like pathogenic viruses on human cultures through their dynamics of coercive morality, reproductive control and evangelical expansion.

But these forms of moral imperative do not occur in the natural world in the way religions claim. If we accepted for a moment that the universe as we now know it has been created by a creator god of the entire universe, we have to accept that this deity has made everything, from black holes and galaxies to nature the way it is, and human nature the way it is, not the way the narrow morally jealous deity of the scriptures demands. On the other hand if we accept that the jealous god does have a moral imperative and has given us free-will just so that we can violate his own feudal order of submission, as slaves to his will, he gains nothing from this arrangement nor form punishing us in the fires of hell. So who or what does gain? What gains are the utopian agendas of the human purveyors of this coercive doctrine to the detriment of believers and non-believers alike.
Richard Alexander in "The Biology of Moral Systems" shows how morality, in both human and animal societies, evolves naturally as an evolutionarily stable strategy. Morality inhibits intra-social strife so that a society can become inter-socially dominant against competing cultures, provided there is sufficient 'altruistic' punishment (not directly benefitting the punisher) to maintain it. However this doesn’t make morality universal, but rather just a local evolutionary phenomenon found in a given human or animal society. Nature still abounds with every kind of niche, involving predators and prey as well as parasites and hosts, in which both competition and cooperation are interwoven in a completely amoral way, except within social groupings possessing the trait of social morality. This is the nature of climax diversity and how life becomes rich and varied.

Morality is thus not a cosmic imperative, but a purely local phenomenon in evolving animal and human societies. We need to learn from nature how climax diversity arises in the enclosing circle of the biosphere to survive from here on. Clearly we accept the complementation of plants and the animals that feed on them, and by the same token, we have herbivores and predatory carnivores, which form a complex interacting system.

**Fig 42:** Isaiah’s peaceable kingdom (left) is an impossible dream, in violation of nature. Just as there are plants and animals, so there are carnivores and herbivores. Life evolves to climax diversity by filling the available niches. The lion hunting wildebeest (right), despite being an affair of tooth and claw, and painfully lethal for the victim, shows us that the wildebeest population also needs the lions. Without the lions, the wildebeest could multiply to the extent that they ate out the pasture resulting in famine and possible extinction. We need to derive our ethical and 'spiritual' understanding from these insights of nature, rather than subjecting nature to our religious delusions.

Neither is the relationship of tooth and claw evil or detrimental to life as a whole. Without the carnivores to keep their population in check the herbivore prey would explode until they reached boom and bust famine by eating out their fodder plants and would likely become extinct. Diseases are likewise not plagues caused by God’s wrath, but natural, albeit harmful parasitic life forms, which we may need to control or even try to eliminate to ensure our own health and survival.

Thus, when we turn to Isaiah’s blessed age, the notion of the lion lying down with the lamb is the other side of the coin from Revelation’s mass extinction. A complete violation of nature’s necessity of tooth and claw to picture a deranged golden age that insists nature should become cooperative in a way that would be completely untenable for animal life, if we could only stop our human sinfulness and embrace peace:

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*

Inhibiting intra-social strife so that a society can become inter-socially dominant is the basis of all tribal and civic deities from Marduk to Yahweh. The gods are jealous so that the people will be fearful and faithful to their culture and not tear it down through internal expedience and corruption. Religions thus stabilized human societies. This made it possible for ever larger social groupings to remain stable and to gain dominance over their competitors, leading to the great wars of history as civilization clashed with civilization. This is why a great deal of the Old Testament rails against competing cultures and tries to steer Israel toward absolute faith in its totem deity, Yahweh even though its actual worship was more diverse than it admits.

As societies and religions evolved, so the gods evolved too, gaining features that better suited them to the changing course of history. Thus iconic deities gave way to more abstract deities, which possessed
The notion of a god acting in history in apparently devastating ways that can see right through you and every move you make, but remain invisible so that you cannot see them to check or verify anything, is an especially daunting prospect, which most people will prefer to comply with than to transgress. Pivotal to the power of such religions is the secondment of all the affairs of the natural world to an ultimate destiny, in which everything you have done will be weighed up and held against you in an illusory afterlife, purveyed as so real and immanent that the best course of all would be to die as a martyr in the struggle for supremacy of the religion you believe in as both Christians and Muslims are want to do, so one finds in the Quran that belief in al-Llah is equated closely with belief in the Day of Resurrection itself because this is where the divine tragedy really plays out.

This tendency finally gained full momentum when religions attached to a people, such as the Hebrew and Hindu religions became converted into global religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. These now gained truly utopian aims, particularly in the former two, where the ultimate destiny becomes conquering the entire Earth. In the case of Christianity, the turn around came with Constantine realizing its potential as the state religion of Rome. In the case of Islam, Muhammad himself crafted the religion to achieve socially utopian aims by force of violence from the very beginning, as we have seen.
However subsequent research, fig 43b, reveals that moralizing gods follow - rather than precede - large increases in social complexity. Powerful moralizing ‘big gods’ and prosocial supernatural punishment tend to appear only after the emergence of ‘megasocieties’ with populations of more than around one million people. Moralizing gods are not a prerequisite for the evolution of social complexity, but they may help to sustain and expand complex multi-ethnic empires after they have become established. By contrast, rituals that facilitate the standardization of religious traditions across large populations generally precede the appearance of moralizing gods. This suggests that ritual practices were more important than the particular content of religious belief to the initial rise of social complexity.

We have seen, throughout the Monotheistic religions, that women are subjected to male control, stoned for not having the tokens of virginity in the Old Testament, condemned as the devil’s gateway to be seen and not heard in Christian traditions, veiled, sequestered and chaperoned and repeatedly stoned again throughout Muslim history, and thrown as widows on the funeral pyre in Hindu culture. This patriarchal affliction, which plagues all the major world religions, originates from very deep mammalian biological roots. While all women know their offspring are their own and are intimately involved in the continuity of life through the physical birth process, men fear their own mortality and are even more fearful of their paternity uncertainty in the face of women, who have always had to hedge their reproductive choices because of the huge investment they have to make, and mortal risk to their lives, in pregnancy, lactation and years of early child rearing. Consequently men have, from very early on, back to our founding gatherer-hunter cultures, tried to circumscribe female reproductive choice to their own ends, and more subtly have tried to define culture in their own image, seeking religious vistas which stress eternal conscious existence over the transient mortality of the flesh and the debased tooth and claw of nature. This cosmological bias manifests both overtly in forms such defining women legally as half the value of men, and by dire punishments such as stoning, and covertly in cosmological world views which look to an eternal subjective conscious after-life, subjugating nature and the passage of the generations to secondary or even brutal, beastly, contaminated or diabolical status.

All of these religions, at the same time, lay claim to all the higher virtues of righteousness and compassion while denigrating human nature as intrinsically flawed and sinful. This is a fundamental lie because human nature, based on our mammalian emotional repertoire, is as capable of original virtue as it is of expedient vice. The complexity of human society depends on a good deal of strategic bluffing in the form of Machiavellian intelligence to provide the many roles that enable a large diverse population to survive, so cooperation always coexists with clandestine defection and a good deal of tit-for-tat, but it is balanced by feelings of love and belonging that have enabled humans to coexist without undue destructive violence and emerge from small autonomous tribal bands to develop art, culture science, music and medicine as well as deeply penetrating philosophies about the nature of existence.

Indeed many of these creative aspects of culture may emerge from sexual love in the displays of prowess gaining the sexual favours of courtship and subsequent partnership, giving sexual concourse a central and sacred role in maintaining our original virtue as the Song of Songs declares. Sexual courtship and the genuine indicators of fitness it invokes, from story telling and music to good hunting and devoted husbandry on the male side and astute social sensibility, coalition building and empathy and on the female side is thus the principal antidote to the sometimes self-serving manifestations of Machiavellian intelligence.

Fig 44: Left, Shakti and Shiva in sexual embrace, inset the Tantric cosmic origin, from intimate coitus to fragmented illusion, right maithuna at Khajuraho.
Sexuality, far from being a depraved enticement is in fact the antidote to mortality the eternal religions seek, because mortality arises from sexual diversity, giving us and our offspring endless new varieties of individual perception and experience. The trade-off is that we are all different and when we die it is our offspring and the passage of the generations that is perennial and, in principle, immortal. It is thus little wonder that Tantric traditions have embraced sacred sex as recorded on the temples at Khajuraho and elsewhere, and that the Tantric cosmic origin is one of deep coital embrace between Shiva and Shakti, in which all the phenomena of nature ensue as samsara as the lovers pull back from cosmic union into the diversity of conscious observers witnessing the universe at large.

Fig 45: There are two known processes for generating complex adaptive structures in the physical universe: (a) de novo external creation by intelligent design and (b) genetic development of the organism in the context of biological evolution. The two processes are clearly distinguishable. Created structures such as the AMD 9080A series CPU (1) and the car made by a robotic assembly line (9) show manifest evidence of externally imposed design, by layered photolithography in (1) and modular assembly from independently manufactured components (9). Evolution of intelligent design (8) is sporadic, disjunctive and idiosyncratic unlike biological evolution, which displays exhaustive evidence of genetic relatedness in the form of evolutionary trees (fig 41), is historically integrative, and shows embryogenic relatedness developmentally (5) in which early embryonic forms of vertebrates all have the tails and many segments of fishes because they have a deep underlying evolutionary relationship, in which fishes became land animals. By contrast with intelligent design, genetic organisms are generated genetically from the molecular level (2) up. Protein and RNA folding (2) is computationally intractable requiring quantum processes. The structure of the organism is developed through catastrophic bifurcation requiring interaction of the parts to form tissue layers and structures, from the invagination of the notochord to the eye (4). Development of brain wiring (3) is interactive, requiring successive waves of neuronal migration and subsequent cell-to-cell signaling to define pathways determining the layers and connections of the cerebral cortex (7). The structure of the organism (6) is fractal, with self-organization occurring on all scales from molecule to cell organelle (a) to cell (b) to tissue (c) to organ to organism. The lesson: Living systems display structural features inconsistent with intelligent design. If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, reproduces like a duck and develops like a duck, it is not intelligently designed, but evolved into its current form. The evolutionary principle is thus key to religions accepting and adapting to the natural world.
Central to the denigration of nature is the patriarchal notion that the mind-sky view is the key to eternal life and that all the phenomena of nature are transient and either illusory or flawed. Everything we have discovered about the existential universe to date shows it to be a unity of complementarities – of wave and particle and boson and fermion in physics, of female and male in biology and of mind and body in existence – as also expressed in the Tao of yin and yang principles. Thus the quest for eternal consciousness has its complement in nature which is perennially immortal and in which we as guardians of the passage of the generation have a prime responsibility to cherish and replenish it. Nature and the diversity and perpetuity of human and all life thus is, and must needs be, our holy grail and raison d’etre.

We also have a duty of honesty and integrity to weigh up the evidence presented by scripture and scientific investigation in terms of how much reliable information it has to give us about the world we live in. The sabbatical creation of Genesis consists of a single short poetic passage containing 3558 characters which amounts to 17790 binary bits. By comparison a typical scientific text such as “Neural Science” by Eric Kandel and co-authors has a thousand times more or 23781150 bits. The human genome has 1000 times more than that or 6000000000 bits and a crude approximation to the brain on the basis of the number of synapses is 100,000 times more than that namely 600000000000000 bits. Put on a scale of order of magnitude in powers of 10 we have the cosmic mantra Öm 1, Genesis One 4, Neural Science 7, Human genome 10, Human Brain 15.

We can’t afford to commit ourselves to literal bibliolatry and sweep aside the vast labyrinth of knowledge we now have of nature in all its genetic detail in blind faith to a short passage no longer than a poem, lyrically but metaphorically describing our origin from tohu va vohu. This was never its intention and is an idolatrous abuse of the scripture. It would not only be an act of scientific and spiritual irresponsibility, it would be an act of complete folly, falsity and futility. As Paul noted, we need to stop behaving little children and grow up and take responsibility for our place in the natural world, lest we waste it irreparably while fixated on the End of Days.

The claims that evolution is only a theory and that intelligent design is a valid alternative are a false doctrine in denial of the evidence from the world around us. In the genetic age, the sweep and passage of evolution has become a reality denied only by those of fixed beliefs determined to impose these on the world at large as part of their faith to their utopian doctrine. We now have a close picture of the genetic evolution, from the first life forms on Earth to Homo sapiens and our migrations out of Africa. We are closing in on the biochemical pathways that enabled life to emerge on the planet and have found evidence for these precursors across wide tracts of the galaxy. All the evidence we have discovered shows that life is a central manifestation of cosmology and that the evolution of intelligent life is the quintessence of expression of the laws of nature in interaction.

None of the evidence about life’s emergence, evolution, or the development of the organism, is consistent with creation by an external agent. The same applies to the laws of nature and the structure of the universe at large. The universe is a dynamical entity in which the cosmic origin appears to be a state of symmetrical unity in which the four forces of nature have merged to become one superforce and the only fluctuations were those caused by quantum theory. From then on, the evolution is dynamic, proceeding according to the laws of nature.

The only way a dynamic universe could be created by an external creator to knowingly invoke the life circumstances of each of us, is to specify an initial condition for everything at a given point in time, which will then unfold under the laws of motion. But a creation in the big bang at the beginning that determines the whole universe as it is now is impossible because there isn’t enough information in the initial state of the big bang to determine all the succeeding increasingly complex events over space-time in the fully-fledged universe. To make matters worse, the laws of motion are quantum laws invoking the uncertainty principle, which overturns Newtonian determinism. Evolution is likewise uncertain, as it is dependent on these very quantum events in the form of mutational changes to the genetic scheme.
Fig 46: Left: Life as an interactive complexity climax of the forces of nature in interaction on the mature cosmic equator, with alternative futures of fractal inflation and cyclic big-bangs. Top left: The universe begins in a state of high-symmetry, in which the forces of nature were merged into one super-force and only quantum fluctuations pertained. From a mere instant after the big bang the ongoing universe, has been shaped by the dynamics of the four forces of nature, gravity, electromagnetism, the weak force and the colour force as expressed in the standard model (lower left) as a quantum relativistic process. The dynamics of galaxy and star formation evolve dynamically. Top right: Our galaxy’s location in its super-cluster shows evidence of dynamic flow under the effects of dark matter (lower right). The standard model and the super-theories under development extending it are based on mathematical principles of internal symmetry and symmetry-breaking. The universe is full of inscrutable physical principles that are inconsistent with the simplicity of an externally imposed intelligent design at a given point in time.

Even if God created the big bang, there is no way to determine how evolution proceeds once it gets going, unless God is endlessly playing dice with the universe to bias the odds at every quantum event. There is no evidence for intelligent intervention in the probabilities of quantum uncertainty. The “spooky action at a distance” that caused Einstein to declare “I can't believe that God plays dice with the universe” has nevertheless become a reality in the form of quantum entanglement between wave-particles. The lesson of quantum entanglement however is that the uncertainty of the quantum is related to hidden correlations between all the wave particles of the universe because they are all mutually-entangled in the cosmic wave function. Again, if ongoing intelligent design were functionally intervening in mutational evolution, we would expect to see evidential signs of this, but there is no evidence from evolution that such an idiosyncratic intervening process is occurring.

If neither the evidence from living organisms, nor from the laws and phenomena of the physical universe displays any signs of systems which could or would have to be generated by intelligent design, rather than evolve generatively, this is a fundamental argument against an external third-party god acting in history being the creator of the universe.

12: Population, Religion and World Domination

An outstanding feature of monotheistic religions is the command to go forth and multiply. Islam and Christianity in particular have an ongoing pattern of maintaining reproduction of the faithful with the avowed intention of populating the planet to fulfill their utopian destinies of world dominion. Contrasting with this, non-religious or unaffiliated people tend to respond more to social circumstances, including a world that is increasingly overpopulated, thus reducing their fertility, both for ethical reasons and to pursue other creative avenues and professional careers. This raises a fundamental question of futures. If established religions continue to sponsor high fertility rates, how will the world's population look in 2100 and how will this affect the world's capacity to address its long-term survival?

Using the Pew Research Center statistics (The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050 www.pewforum.org/files/2015/03/PF_15.04.02_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf) one arrives at the following breakdown. Of all the religions, Islam has the highest fertility rate of 3.1, followed by Christians 2.7 Hindus and Jews 2.3 and 2.4, just below the world average of 2.5, with all other groups, including Buddhists 1.6
and unaffiliated 1.7 well below replacement rates. In Europe, Muslim fertility rates are significantly higher than the national average and in Norway and Finland exceed the worldwide Muslim average, but in Europe the contribution from migration is larger than that due to fertility alone with the two compounding to make a potentially explosive scenario for cultural conflict. In North America, as of 2010, the Muslim population only accounted for one percent of the whole and the Christian population is predicted to grow even larger, underlying that in the US, Christian fundamentalism is more of a concern for establishing viable future policies to protect the living planet. Latin America likewise has almost exclusively Christian influences to contend with, exemplified in attitudes to contraception (which however do not seem to be seriously affecting fertility rates there) and abortion even when the health of the mother is threatened or the fetus is known to have serious abnormalities.

Running the simulation out to 2100 on the basis that relative fertility rates remain stable but absolute rates fall across the board in line with current predicted trends (Gerland P et al. 2014 World population stabilization unlikely this century doi:10.1126/science.1257469), we arrive at the picture in fig 47. Muslims now form around 35% of a world population of 11.5 billion, while Christians represent 31%, although their very different regional distributions will mean they retain their traditional spheres of influence. Europe would have around 17.5% Muslims if migration if war in the Middle east doubles the Pew 2010 estimates, as it seems to be currently, potentially leading to deep cultural conflicts if these populations do not integrate with European culture or try to impose Sharia and other repressive Muslim practices. As we have seen with the Paris attacks, even with a Muslim population well below this level violent terrorist operations can cause havoc and widespread insecurity and are likely to continue given the propensity of Islam for jihad following Muhammad’s own example. In North America with only 4%, the situation doesn’t imply major cultural crises. Unaffiliated worldwide would have fallen to a strategically eclipsed 11% from 16% at present, but grow from 25% at present in North America to 33% and in Europe from 15% to 27%, making both major centers of Western Culture more secular than at present due to switching. However sub-Saharan Africa would have a continent-wide Muslim population of 38%, which could see several African countries, including Nigeria and potentially Tanzania becoming Muslim majority.

13: Towards a Resolution

A major theme of this article has been that notions of god and the theistic cosmologies that religions evoke also evolve, as cultures evolve, in complete contrast to the notion of an unchanging ‘true’ god acting in history. Given this, we need to re-examine the notion of the creator deity. If both the universe and living systems show profound evidence of being dynamic self-organized structures, we need to look towards models of existential and spiritual reality which fit with the conscious and natural evidence we find around us, rather than trying to impose naive affirmative beliefs and moral imperatives coercively on reality at large.

The Song of Songs, the Upanishads and the Tao do give us hints of how a new spiritual mysticism might arise which is consistent with the natural universe as we now know it to be and with our emotional capacities both for fear, jealousy and anger and for encompassing love which overflows narrow genetic boundaries.
The Song of Songs reveals to us the germ of abundant sexual fertility, courtship and love at the root of the Tree of Life, tragically hidden since the Fall. In sexual variety lies the antidote to individual mortality in the passage of the generations, so restoring it to its sacred place completes the perennial philosophy.

Setting aside all moral notions about karma and reincarnation, the Upanishads attest that in the inner depths of our personal consciousness relaxed of its individual concerns for mortal survival lies a cosmic form of consciousness that is fundamentally the same as the integrated cosmic consciousness of the universe as a whole. This is not a third party description but a complementary first party subjective (consciousness) and second party objective (cosmos) description. It is this cosmic consciousness of the universe, which we all share, which deists naively and without due cause attribute to being the third party external agent they call God.

Likewise the Tao stresses that the nature of the experiential universe is one of complements: yin and yang as creative and receptive principles, female and male, egg and sperm, wave and particle, matter-forming fermion and radiation and force mediating boson, mind and body, consciousness and the material world, and the prisoners' dilemma of cooperation and defection in the game of life.

Contrary to notion of original sin, altruistic morality is a natural product of social evolution. Humans possess original virtue in our emotional capacity for love of others as well as the defences of anger and jealousy, which extends far beyond narrow genetic boundaries. It is this original virtue that sustained us into the cultural era, long before prescriptive religions existed.

Finally nature itself shows us that cherishing and replenishing the Earth and its living diversity is ultimately the key to our survival as a species and that, despite our mortality as individuals, we gain our meaning and fulfillment in giving our lives to protecting the passage of the generations, as our ancestors and their ancestors have done, so that the thread of life remains unbroken to this day.

Since writing this article, I have elaborated this insight into a major new work The Resplendence Codex (http://dhushara.com/apoc/), based on efforts we made to this end in Jerusalem for the Millennium, whose resolution in the Tao and Resplendence sections sets out a new paradigm beyond religion, to cherish and replenish the Earth throughout the generations of the diversity of life.

![Fig 48: Paradise Found David Miller www.mauiarts.com](http://dhushara.com/apoc/)

Resplendence means many things. We usually think of it as a glorious state of natural splendour, but its root meaning re-splendere is to "shine brightly" or "shine again". It is thus both the full overflowing abundance of
paradise, and as a global consciousness, it is the light of the world. But it has a deeper meaning, as the true immortal condition of humanity and is hence the natural paradigm successor to religion.

Resplendence is both an attitude of mind and a social dynamic attuned to bringing Earth back to a state of resplendent paradise, sustainable and resilient over evolutionary time scales, to ensure our own survival and the survival of the diversity of life. Instead of leading to the physically unrealizable imaginary scenarios of religions, such as heaven and hell in the Day of Judgment, resplendence leads to a single real and positively resplendent outcome - the reparadising of Earth in natural abundance, through a democratic culture empowered by climax technology, medicine and science and based on the principles of ecosystemic diversity.

Resplendence complements the knowledge provided by science with the wisdom of what to do about it, in the same way religion has sought to complement practical knowledge in human history. Science deals with the pursuit of the knowledge of how nature and the universe work, while the wisdom of resplendence deals with what we creatively do with this knowledge, in reflowering paradise - the ultimate manifestation of wisdom in action.

We all want to find meaning in life and want it to have a meaning that extends beyond our own lifetime. We also want the security that we are living in a world that has a viable future for our offspring and the future generations. The critical source of our angst that many of us turn to religion to alleviate, is that we are living in a world which is not only teeming with injustice, violent conflicts and weapons of mass destruction, but is lurching towards an uncertain future as a result of human impacts on the world's living habitats, climate and resources which could take us to an irreversible tipping point, undermining the future of unborn generations. These are problems we need to deal with and heal in this life to have a sense of fulfillment, not just pass them on to future generations to worry about, or to an imagined afterlife full of even more graphic tortures and punishments. The only meaningful contribution we can make to the future is through our offspring, our contributions to understanding in culture and society, in the humanities, science, art and music, through innovations we bring to society which produce lasting benefit and through actually protecting the living planet through our actions to guard the diversity of life.

Nothing else - no selfish, expedient, greedy or jealous motive, or action - can serve to give anything more than a futile and temporary distraction from the central goal of creative integration with the immortal flow of life around us. Redemption comes through coherence and integration with paradise pure and simple. And paradise is a realizable condition, if we only put our collective resources and inspiration to work to achieve it.

Religion, according to Augustine and others, comes from re-ligare to "bind again" or "bind fast". Religions bind together spiritually-minded people into mass movements, but religions are also contaminated with the notion of bondage to a potentially oppressive utopian moral order. This is a fascist totalitarian notion that makes traditional religions dangerous and harmful to world futures. The fasces is a bundle of sticks, sometimes with a protruding axe, or labrys, whose strength bound together is greater than the sum of its parts.

In scientific revolutions, the skeptical principle of inquiry, seeks verification from nature, confirming a theory to be true only when all attempts to negate it result in contradiction, rather than imposing preconceived beliefs. This means that descriptions of reality only remain stable over limited epochs, called paradigms, punctuated by evolutionary leaps. When a new theory, or description of reality, is discovered, which generalizes, or replaces a previous one, a new scientific paradigm is born. The term paradigm itself has an ancient origin in Greek paradeigma, "pattern, example" from para, "beside, beyond" and deiknumi "to show, to point out" meaning "exhibit, represent, expose". The term was used in Plato's Timaeus as the model or pattern that the Demiurge (god) used to create the cosmos. Resplendence in making a paradigm transition from religion does presicely this, transforming the naive view of religious creation of the cosmos by God into a wisdom tradition to guide human action based on the extraordinarily confounding and detailed scientific knowledge of the universe we have more recently accumulated.

Human societies and individual consciousness have been driven by two complementary sensibilities. On the one hand, the practical understanding of nature is essential for survival, manifest in gatherer-hunter society, for example in knowledge of diverse food and medicinal plant species and in the practicalities of hunting and
developing arrow poisons and this has eventually become science. Complementing this are feelings of belonging and meaning in a precocious natural world, associated with beliefs in spirits and deities that guide behavior towards societal strength through morality, and explain the mortal condition and the vagaries of fate. These have over time become what we call science and religion. However, religions have resisted natural paradigm evolution because they seek permanent ascendancy. Thus Jesus, Buddha and Muhammad remain fixed male entities impeding the natural evolution of human insight and world guardianship of nature. Buddha has become a symbol of perfection unattainable in the round of birth and death. Muhammad is claimed to be the last prophet under pain of execution. Jesus is claimed to be going to return in the ‘second coming’ as the avenging Lord. This prevents natural evolution, even though our understanding of the world, and the closing circle of the biosphere have been transformed, both by science, and human impacts of our burgeoning planetary technological society, leading to climate change, ecocrisis and potentially irreversible risks to human and natural survival.

Resplendence accepts the paradigm shift to the scientific description of reality in all its manifestations, while at the same time resolving the dilemma of existence in a way religions are failing to do, by coupling our sense of purpose and collective action to the one thing that immortalizes us - protecting the life flow of the living planet and its generations. Gods are projections of conscious personalities onto the cosmos that come from an earlier phase in human emergence, where gatherer-hunters devised parent-like entities to guard over their vulnerable lives in a tumultuous world, and later in our cultural adolescence, agricultural civilizations used increasingly powerful deities as punishing moral entities holding sway over life and death, and the implied after-life as the final moral end-of-days scenario.

With the coming to maturity of human culture in reaching a state today where human actions themselves can irreversibly harm the planet's future, we have to accept we have entered a state of de-facto maturity and accept that it is we ourselves, neither God, nor Jesus as Lord in the Day of Judgment, who must assume responsibility for beneficient guardianship of the planetary future, and achieve the enlightenment to be able to do this successfully. This is a complete fulfillment of our life meaning and purpose and enables the mystery of conscious existence to be more and more deeply explored over the lifetimes of all the sentient participants as an open-ended process.

Politically, resplendence aims at an ecosystemically diverse informed non-violent democratic society of mutually enlightened beings, possessing maximal autonomy of choice, avoiding the tyranny of the majority democracies are prone to, while recognizing the need to actively oppose all forms of totalitarianism that could lead to a loss of democratic autonomy, both from political movements such as totalitarian fascism and communism and from world religions with totalitarian doctrines that form an even more all-encompassing utopian threat to freedom of choice and world futures.

Technologically, resplendence seeks a society utilizing the most advanced techniques in a sensitive way which works closely with evolutionary principles to achieve a high standard of living and fully informed intelligence, while having minimal impact on and actively restoring the biospheric resilience of the planet over evolutionary time scales. The energy economy needs urgently to move to renewable forms of energy not having deleterious impacts on the climate and biosphere as a whole. The information economy needs to remain as free as possible from governmental surveillance and accessible to all people.

Great precautionary care needs to be applied to bootstrap genetic technologies such as germ-line editing and engineering, which feedback directly into the process of genetic evolution itself and hence the informational foundation of the biosphere. These technologies have vast utopian potential, and invoke the temptation to make choices which result in an elitist dependence on advanced reproductive technology. They are liable to lead to ‘poisoned chalice’ dystopias, lacking the resilience to survive over evolutionary time scales.

Weapons of mass destruction need to be replaced by programs to provide defences against events on an astronomical scale threatening to the continuity of life, such as asteroid impacts and nearby supernovae. Questions of interstellar migration, or communication, need to be considered cautiously for their deeper implications.
Resplendence is the natural paradigm successor to religion, in which we cherish and replenish the Earth throughout the generations of the diversity of life, no longer seeing through a glass darkly, but now face-to-face, coming into coherence with our sexually-immortal condition, becoming the source of a collective illumination of enlightenment, both scientific and visionary, to flower the future generations and sustain the epoch of paradise on Earth.

Spiritually, resplendence seeks a condition where every individual is able to explore the mystical and visionary undercurrents of the conscious condition first hand, without becoming subject to oppressive forces seeking to assert any religious belief or creed, or to deny people the opportunity to experience such states themselves through legislation to prevent the use of visionary sacraments or drugs which induce visionary states.

Humans since the dawn of history have used meditation, deprivation and visionary plants and fungi from peyote, through ayahuasca, the vine of the soul, to sacred mushrooms, teonanactl, cannabis, iboga and other natural visionary substances, to enter into internal conscious states that form an inner cosmology, complementing the external cosmology of nature and the physical universe. We need to accept that the pursuit of knowledge requires an attitude of social freedom for individuals to explore their own inner conscious states using visionary species and substances. Attempting to ban access to mind altering substances is a benighted policy aimed more at shoring up mindless consumer materialism and existing traditional religious beliefs than any protection of society from misadventure. Any forms of societal abuse of substances need to be treated as a heath matter to avoid the growth of violent criminal organizations seeking to profit from banned substances in an age where technology is making synthesis on demand ever more available.

The science of consciousness research is beginning to explore these features, just as practitioners of the Vedantic and Taoist traditions have done over millennia in their meditation, and as tribal shamans have done before them in vision quests on power plants and fungi. Each of us, as conscious sentient beings, has direct access to these realms. Consciousness is the first person account and the acid test is in the first person, not in third person tales of super-human prophets and miracle-workers. We do not need prescriptive religions to fully explore it for ourselves.

At the same time neuroscience is discovering how a variety of conscious mental states are generated in different regions of the brain in terms of their neural connections, their electrical activity and neurotransmitter dynamics. While the precise physics leading to the existence of subjective consciousness is still a scientific enigma, there is evidence the brain uses edge-of-chaos dynamics coupled with quantum entanglement in its processing in a way which may explain both why consciousness exists and why our personal experience of conscious free-will is valid. Subjective consciousness appears to have evolved in organisms to anticipate key immediate future events - threats to survival and strategic opportunities. The past-future handshaking
properties of quantum entanglement may permit intuitive forms of conscious anticipation complementing deductive processes based on memory and past experience. They could also in turn provide the loophole for intentional will through quantum uncertainty of the ongoing instabilities in the brain state. This could in turn confirm that we are conscious sentient beings with voluntary control of our decision-making and behaviour. Given we do then have personal responsibility to act, we need to give primary focus to cherishing and protecting the future generations of humanity and the diversity of biosphere.

Fig 50: An envelope of mental states from ’The Cosmology of Mental States’
http://dhushara.com/mental/