A God Whose Name is 'Jealous'

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See also:

1: **The Resplendence Codex: Reflowering Apocalypse in the Tree of Life**
2: Religion, Politics, Sexual Reproduction and the Future of Human Society
3: **Nature, Violence, Consciousness, Sexuality and World Religion**

Temptation, Fall, and Expulsion from nature and sexual integration, into mortality through a Jealous God: Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions explain our origin in the Eden myth, in which Eve and then Adam are cursed for eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which Eve sought rather as the wisdom of the life tree, not knowing there were two. They are banished lest they also eat of the tree of life and become as God. For their 'concupiscence' in 'knowing' one another, barred from paradise as sexual mortals by a flaming sword, woman to suffer the travail pains of childbirth and to be ruled by her husband while man to conquers nature by the sweat of his brow. (Brothers Limbourg)

Introduction

"We Yolungu are a jealous people and have been since the days we lived in the bush in clans. We are jealous of our wife or husband, for fear she or he is looking at another. If a husband has several wives he is all the more jealous, and the wives are jealous of each other ... make no mistake, the big J is part of our nature" (Australian aboriginal).

It is not just perpetual jeaolusy in our human nature that permeates monotheism, but the unrelenting jealousy of God. The Old Testament, imbues God's essential nature sine qua non, by his very name, as jealousy and sexually jealous of those 'whoring' after other gods.

> But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:
> For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, WHOSE NAME IS JEALOUS,
> is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land,
> and they go a WHORING after their gods. (Exodus 34:13)

This utterly mammalian defensive emotion is a projection of primate male emotional and sexual anxiety on to the creative source itself. Jealousy is centrally sexual and the Old Testament speaks of the jealousy of God in clearly sexual terms:

> And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged;
> and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. (Ezekiel 16:38)

> Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;
> (For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you)
> lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee,
> and destroy thee from off the face of the earth. (Deut 6:14)

There is clearly a paradox here, for while jealousy is also natural, although epitomized by male violence against women, it is also acknowledged to be potentially disastrous and love is supreme. In the words of the Song of Songs:

> Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:
> for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave:
> the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.
> Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it (8:6)

Nowhere are our double-standards more pronounced than in the matter of jealousy. "Thou shalt not covet". "Thou shalt not commit adultery". These two run partially counter to one another, for while covetous jealousy is regarded as morally corrupt envy, a destroyer of love and trust, jealousy is a natural evolutionary defence against the ubiquitous threat of sexual betrayal. To be jealous is to be 'zealous' of one's threatened resource in a partner. Men often display violent reactions if 'their' woman falls for another, because of the intensely felt threat of defilement to their genetic paternity. Women can afford to be more circumspect about a partner's one night stand, but become very defensive when a man might transfer his principal affections and resources to another. However the greatest double standard of all is the way in which a jealous God came to zealously rule our lives and social order. This leads precisely to the world crisis of apocalyptic proportions we continue to creep towards.

God's jealousy can have meaning only in a climate of frank polytheism, where 'He' may and does have real rivals inside and outside the immediate cultural context:

> 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.
> Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations (Psalm 82).

As we shall note, Yahweh-Adonai was originally paired conjugally with consorts Anath and Asherah. This sexual partnership is apparent in Proverbs, where God is paired from the beginning with his feminine complement, Hochmah, or Wisdom:

> 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.
> When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.
> Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.
When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth.
(8)

Wisdom is also the tree of life:

She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.
Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.
The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens (3).

Trouble in Paradise

Turning to this very mythical beginning in Genesis we find a frank double perspective running through the whole account. In the priestly sabbatical creation of Genesis 1, God in the plural 'Elohim, creates the universe from the formless deep - tohu vo vohu:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void;
and darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters.

in a male act of symbolic creation, dividing primal chaos through the power of speech:

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
And God saw the light, that it was good:
and God divided the light from the darkness.

Then 'Elohim creates woman and man dyadically in 'their' likeness:

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:
So God created man in 'their' own image,
in the image of God created he him;
male and female created he them.

and blesses them, exhorts them to be sexually fruitful and gives them dominion over the whole of nature to subdue it and yet to replenish the Earth.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them,
Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,
and subdue it: and have dominion
over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air,
and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

However, the Yahwistic author J's Edenic account has very different undertones of cursing rather than blessing, blaming the entire fall of humanity from immortality in paradise on the perfidious nature of woman. A lone God, jealous lest humanity like 'him' gain both knowledge and immortal life, casts them out of paradise, and submits woman to the rule of man.

Yaweh firstly forms man from the dust of the earth and breathes a living soul into him, supplanting a natural birth from the womb of the goddess in the patriarchal tradition, and then makes a garden of paradise for the man to dress and keep, containing at its centre the trees of life and knowledge of dark and light. After making man, God makes the animals, whom Adam names in a secondary act of symbolic creation.

In the garden God plants a dyad of two trees, the tree of life representing immortal wisdom and the tree of good and evil representing analytic knowledge. He tells Adam alone that the fruit of the tree of knowledge is forbidden:

Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it:
for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Only then does he create 'woman' out of Adam's rib:

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam,
and he slept: and he took one of his ribs,
And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man,
made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

This is an inversion of the more ancient Sumerian tale in which the goddess Ninhursag allows eight forbidden plants to grow in the garden of creation. Enki eats from them and is stricken. Ninhursag relents: "To the goddess Ninti I have given birth for you". Ninti means both 'female ruler of life' and 'female ruler of the rib'.

This twist to the tale is calculated to make woman subject to man from the very beginning and indeed Adam promptly names her 'woman' because she is flesh of 'his' flesh. Neither are they non sexual because he shall 'cleave' unto her as man and wife.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:
she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.
Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother,
and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.
And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Commentators have endlessly debated how this affects the status of women. Calvin saw the Woman as merely an accession to the man, though created in the image of God, albeit to the second degree. Other commentators, consistent with Kabbalistic ideas, suggest Adam, before losing his rib, was androgynous 'human' rather than primal 'man', consistent with the third, briefest and again 'Elhoistic creation story of Genesis 5:

"This is the book of the generations of Adam.
In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;
Male and female created he them;
and blessed them, and called their name Adam,
in the day when they were created".

Rachel Speight saw woman as more refined, made by God from flesh, rather than mere dust. Tribble (R700) extended this idea to woman being the culmination of God's creation. However as Milton notes in "Paradise Lost" - man is for God, she is merely for God in him.

We now enter into the period of trickery by Yaweh and his opponent the 'serpent'. This is again reminiscent of several Sumerian myths. Gilgamesh is robbed by a serpent of the plant of immortal life. Adapa is likewise tricked by the gods into rejecting the bread and waters of life thinking them to be those of death.

The serpent asks a seemingly innocent question: "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve responds, presumably on the basis of Adam's word, that the tree "in the centre of the garden" is forbidden, suggesting she has not even been told by the men which tree is which. The serpent responds "Ye shall not surely die" saying God knows your eyes will be opened, knowing good and evil and you shall be as gods.

Durer: The cat is about to pounce - Sex becomes predation.

Eve now makes the best assessment she can, finding the fruit fair in an astute gatherer's eyes, neither seeking analytic knowledge, but integrative wisdom:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,
and that it was pleasant to the eyes,
and a tree to be desired to make one wise,
she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat,
and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

"Their eyes were opened", but the consequence seems to be the immediate sexual modesty of the fig leaf. The 'lubricity', or 'concupiscence', Augustine cited as 'original sin' is the loss of voluntary control over the unruly penis and the sexual desire that necessarily engulfs us as biologically reproducing beings, but this is a far cry from Jewish fertility religion, which extols the sexual act. The implication is however that by disobeying God and eating the fruit, man was enticed into lustful sex by woman, which now becomes a primal tragedy - mortality by the curse of a jealous God - through the knowledge of good and evil. Woman is thus branded as the earthy seducer of male fidelity. But notice this is not a same sex union. Adam and Eve is not Adam and Steve.

Yahweh now sets enmity between the woman and the serpent suggesting this refers to a liaison between the serpent and female fertility, but in a way which for all time remains a pregnant and tacit acknowledgment of women's own genetic fertility - 'her seed' in addition to that of Adam:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed;

Is the serpent a projection of female fascination with the unrestrained penis of mixed paternity, as these two seeds suggest, or a manifestation of the goddess, or the accursed religions of the nations? Although Qadesh held two snakes, these were serpents of regeneration of life. The serpent is also Nabu, god of wisdom and language. Moses himself carried the serpent Nehustan on a pole, as echoed in the brazen serpent found in the Midianite shrine at Timna. The key to the serpent, as always, is the trickster of immortality, shedding its skin.

Now the patriarchal imperative really begins to bite. First and foremost, Yahweh condemns the woman to reproduction in the place of immortality, in the pain of child-bearing, and establishes the entire paradigm of male domination, in submission to her husband:

I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception;
in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;
and thy desire shall be to thy husband,
and he shall rule over thee.

Only then does he curse the ground, condemning the man for hearkening to the woman, now doomed to live by the sweat of his brow, conquering the wilderness, passing from dust to dust as mortal beings. Creation is replaced by procreation. McElvaine (R457) sees Eden as a metaphor for the transition from gatherer-hunter society, in which men reacted to the power women gained from the 'fruit' of agriculture by seizing patriarchal control.

At this point Adam renames his wife Eve:

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living."

Eve as the 'mother of all living' hearkens back to the mother goddess. This again has a double meaning. In Hebrew the word Hawwa (Eve) means 'she who creates life', but in Aramaic it means 'serpent'. Of course Jewish folklore says that Eve is the tame woman in the piece, and that Adam's first wife was Lilith, who refused to lie under him in the submissive 'missionary position' and flew up into the heavens. Solomon is said to have tested Bilqis the Queen of Sheba to walk across a mirror in case her feet were hairy like Lilith's.

Then in an ultimate act of jealousy, Yahweh shuts them out of paradise lest they become 'as one of us' strangely again suggesting not one god but 'Elohim - a host:

Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil:
and now, lest he put forth his hand,
and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:
So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden ...
a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Central to the elaboration of this theme is the concept of the covenant between God and his 'chosen' people, a theme repeated with Noah, then Abraham and finally with Moses. Lerner (R407 188) points out that the form of the covenant closely parallels Hittite royal pacts with a vassal subject from Nuzi. In each of these covenants there is a central male procreative purpose of promising seed as the stars in the sky and dust of the earth, in return for the sacrificial male sexual token of circumcision of the foreskin. The supposedly higher abstract aniconic 'god acting in history' is thus a god of patrimony, paternity certainty and pantriliny.

In a frightening turn around from the priestly vegetarian 'trees for meat' of Genesis 1, when God likes the smell of Noah's burned meat, we hear:

"And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Gen 9:1).

"The Two Conditions of the World" The primal division of reality imposed on the feminine through the culture of the jealous god.

The Two Conditions of the World (anonymous, 15th Century).

Sacred Marriage and the Strange Woman

The jealousy, central to the manner of God acting in history, manifests in a directly sexual relationship - a 'marriage' between God and the people. In Judaism it is the marriage between YHVH as husband and Israel as unfaithful wife.

Proverbs contrasts the good wife to the 'strange woman' who is a seductress:

I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning:
let us solace ourselves with loves.
For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: ...
Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.
For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.
Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death (7).

The young virginal wife and the prudent wife, like Wisdom, are extolled:
Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.
Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe;
let her breasts satisfy thee at all times;
and be thou ravished always with her love (5).

House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord (19).

By contrast, the 'strange woman' is 'abhorred' as the pits of Sheol:

And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman,
and embrace the bosom of a stranger? (5)
For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:
But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.
Her feet go down to death;
her steps take hold on hell (5).

To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.
Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.
For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread:
and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life (6).

The strange woman poses in iconic form the reaction of Jewish patriarchal society to the prospect of a married woman having an affair with a younger man while her husband is away. This is not a professional prostitute but simply a wife who is not staying alone at home like the good woman should. The implication is that any reproductive freedom for the woman is equivalent to prostitution, while the male may have wives aplenty. Nehama Aschkenasy (R24) compares her to Eve "The first female became the prototype of all women and her story a paradigm of female existence."

Regina Schwartz in "The Curse of Cain" (R629) notes

"The laws collude with this metaphor of Israel as a subjugated and disobedient woman: in Lev 20:10 and Deut 22:22, both the man and the woman who engage in adultery must die; in Deut 22:20, a bride who cannot prove her virginity must be stoned to death. "Adultery in this larger context is understood not only as an aberration of personal behavior, but also as a social disorder with religious implications: adultery is a disturbance of the order of social relations established by God.' The "alien woman"-another man's wife-has forgotten the covenant of God (Prov 2:17), and the link between such faithlessness and landlessness is overt: Those who go to the foreign woman "delight in the perversities of the wicked whose paths are crooked" (Prov 2:14). ... For her house bows down to death, and her tracks to the departed. All going in to her do not return, nor do they reach the paths of life.... For the upright shall live (in) the land; and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth; and the transgressors shall be rooted up from it. (Prov 2:18) ...The biblical "alien woman" has been described succinctly: "she is an archetype of disorder at all levels of existence."

Just how lethal the jealousy against any 'whoring' or adulterous relationship of Israel with the gods of the nations was set out to be is stated in Deuteronomy. Here if people are found to be worshiping other gods or even secretly suggesting to do so, even if brother, son or daughter, wife or friend, they are condemned to summary personal and vigilante murder of religious freedom, which carries over directly to the Islamic death penalty for apostasy.

"Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. ... The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you." (Deut 13.6, 17:2).

Shepherd Tribes in the Land of Milk and Honey

The origins of this highly dysfunctional 'divine' relationship of male jealousy and ultimate suspicion of the 'whoring' ways of the woman lie in the clash of cultures emerging from the Exodus. "In agricultural Canaan the Queen of Heaven eclipsed the male god. Adon, the Lord was the son of the Queen of Heaven, and a subordinate deity by her side. ... But to the more conservative elements among the Hebrew tribes those agricultural forms of the Semitic cult were an abomination.

"So completely had Yahweh become assimilated to him that not only were the two cults confounded, the Jewish women celebrating the 'lamentations' for Tammuz in the national temple, but the very names had become inextricably blended; Yahweh was as often as not spoken of as 'The Lord', Adon", or Adonai .. also the Syrian Adonis, born from a tree" (Briffault R76 v3 109).

"When the Hebrew tribes under the leadership of the votaries of the god of Sinai came out of the 'land of drought' into a land flowing with milk and honey of the Queen of Heaven, they found their own race there and their own religion but modified by the effects of agricultural civilization ... The Queen of Heaven, under whatever name,. she may have been worshipped - possibly Miriam, ... the high-priestess among the Levites, - belonged from time immemorial to Jewish cult ... The Host of Heaven - the very 'Elohim of the astral deities was a notable component of this worship. ... The temple of Jerusalem was simultaneously dedicated to Yahweh and the Queen of Heaven. Before it stood the asherah, symbolic trees that are throughout Semitic lands associated with the female aspect of the deity" (R76 110).

Looking back through the inverted telescope of multiple editorial redactions of the Old Testament, in the polarized climate of exile, and the ensuing apocalyptic revival of monotheism under the patronage of the Zoroastrian Persian king Cyrus the Mede, it is hard for us to appreciate that the roots of Hebrew worship are far more diverse and syncretic than the monolithic monotheism of the Yahweh-only movement would suggest.

Tribal religion was a decentralized spiritual faith extending from the divided animals of Abraham's desert covenant, through the stones of Bethel and the oaks of Shechem and Mamre, to the canvassed tabernacles which preceded the centralized temple worship.

"In all places where I record my name I will come unto these and bless thee" (Ex 20:24).

During the Philistine dominance a series of conflicts and treaties ensued between the shepherding settlements established in the drier hillier areas by the Israelites and Canaanite cities. Joshua tells of genocidal battles at Hazor and Jericho in which all were slain by the command of God, but archaeology tells of a mix of local warfare and cultural intermingling.

In the time of the Judges, the power and respect of women was comparable to that of men:

"And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.
And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim:
and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. (Judges 4:4)"

The Song of Deborah, one of the oldest passages in the Bible, illustrates the continuing strength of women even in times of conflict.

"Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. ... Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel. ... The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:1).

There is a severe warning in Judges (19) that matrilineal patterns were giving way to a staunch patriliny. The concubine of Bethlehem-Judah is accused of 'whoring' by going back to live with her father-in-law for four months. When the Levite returned to claim her, the father-in-law kept saying to stay a little longer for six days, nigh on a week. When the couple left and turned in at Gibeath of the Benjaminites, men of Belial ask to 'know the man within'. In an attempt to avoid sodomy, the host

offers his daughter to which they refuse. The Levite then offers his concubine. She is raped and abused all night and dies on the doorstep, while her master sleeps peacefully. He then cuts her in twelve pieces and sends them to all the coasts of Israel setting off the Benjaminite wars. These are finally resolved in moving four hundred virgins of Jabesh-Gilead to their husbands homes, capped by the abduction of the daughters of Shiloh dancing at a festival to satisfy the remaining Benjaminite men. As noted by David Bakan, the story is a glaring affront to those matriarchal traditions which expected the son-in-law to stay with the wife's family as Jacob did (Lerner R407 175).

The tale of the Daughter of Jephtath mingles human sacrifice, particularly in times of disaster with a tradition of goddess worship in the high places which lingered long after:

"Jephthah vowed unto the Lord 'If thou shalt deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.' So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands. ... And Jephthah came unto his house, and his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; And he rent his clothes, and said, 'Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back'. And she said unto him 'Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows'. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. At the end of two months, she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year" Judges (11:30).

Hebrew Kings and the Rape of the Sanctuaries

During the era of the Kings, a period of syncretic integration with the settled agricultural Canaanites of the cities began. This was probably a consequence both of the unification of the agrarian and nomadic populations under one rule, and the somewhat more cosmopolitan perspective of the monarchs. The Jewish kings followed the tradition of ancient fertility kings. David danced before the Ark of the Covenant in the eyes of all the women to Michal's bane and disgust. Sacred kingship is evidenced again in the termination of the aged David's reign when he is unable to consort with Abishag. It is Bathsheba, who at this point entreaties the king, ensuring the succession to her own son Solomon, the son she conceived with David, as the wife of Uriah the Hittite, David's general, whom David arranged to be killed in battle. David's son Absalom had already attempted to usurp the throne by going "unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel". Absalom was hung in a tree in an aition of ritual sacrifice of the sacred king accursed, as Jesus was:

" And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." (Deut 21:22),

Solomon, was also a sacred king who was renowned for building the Temple at Jerusalem, but equally reviled for also following the deities of his many wives and building sanctuaries to them on the high places round Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:8).

And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

Briffault notes: "The temple of Jerusalem was simultaneously dedicated to Yahweh and to the Queen of Heaven. The pillars Jachim and Boaz were said to stand for the sun and moon. Before it stood the Asherah".

The son of Solomon, went further and moved the image of the goddess into the Temple itself. In Samaria, Jeroboam installed golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Afterwards there was a partial removal of the idols, but it did not extend to the high sanctuaries. Ahaz again returned the equilibrium to the syncretic worship of the nations:

"and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree."

At Gezeh remains of sacrificed cows and bulls are found consistent with worship of Yaho and Hathor (Briffault R76 v3 110). At Kuntillet in the 8th century BC Yhwh gives a blessing with his Asherah, identified with Canaanite Athirat (McCarter R452 143, Maier R432). Among the Jews of Elephantine as late as the fifth century B.C., Yahweh was associated with his consort. The names of the Elohim were joined, as Anath-Yahu (Kraeling R391 88).

Seal of Hezekiah discovered in 2009. It was found at the site of an ancient dump, beside the wall that surrounds Jerusalem's Old City. The bulla originally beleived to have been on a papyrus scolll is imprinted with the symbol of a winged sun and an inscription in an ancient Hebrew script, saying: "Belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz king of Judah".

The worship of the Queen of Heaven continued alongside that of Yahweh through the time of the Kings until the fall of the Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians. The colonization of Samaria was perceived by the more conservative Judaeans as a sign that the ways of tolerance of the Northern Kingdom had led to disaster. Thus in about 720 Hezekiah led a fundamentalist revision: (2 Kings 18:4):

"He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves [asherah],
and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made:
for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan".

However Jeremiah 44:16 notes the continuing popularity of the Queen in Jerusalem:

"As for the word thou hast unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not harken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatever 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 we had plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, and poured out drink offerings to her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the Queen of Heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did we alone make her cakes or worship her ... without our men folk?"

His passage in 7:15 is prophetic of what is to come.

"Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched."

However again Manasseh brought the pendulum back and built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Ba'al, and made a grove (Asherah), as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the Lord said ... will I put my name for ever".

But in 622 Hilkiah persuaded young King Josiah that a "hidden" text in the temple (Deuteronomy) revealed the "true faith" of the "Yahweh only" movement. This is arguably the point where 'no other gods before me' became strict monotheism - no other gods at all. Much of the Old Testament has been subsequently recomposed to portray the earlier history as monotheistic. What is very significant is that a prophetess is made responsible for the judgement:

"And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord ... and Shaphan the scribe ... read it before the king. And ... when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And ... commanded ... 'Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book' ... So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, wife of Shallum, keeper of the wardrobe; in Jerusalem in the college; and communed with her. And she said ... 'Tell the man that sent you to me 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched" (2 Kings 22:8).

In both Kings and Chronicles we find parallel accounts of the 'rape of the sanctuaries':

"[Josiah] began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars" (2 Chron 34 4-5).

And he brought out the grove (asherah) from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he brake down the pavillions of the effeminate, which were in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove (2 Kings 23 3).

So we have one of the most outstanding examples in history of a self-fulfilling prophecy, for Josiah was simply carrying out the instructions 'found' so conveniently in the temple:

"These are the statutes and judgements ... Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye possessed served their gods, upon the mountain and on the high hills and under every green tree. And ye shall overthrow their alters and break their pillars and burn their groves with fire ... But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes ... thither thou shalt come. ... Take heed of thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest, but in the place the Lord shall choose in any one of thy tribes" (Deut 12:1).

Not only were the Ba'al destroyed, but so was the Asherah or grove, Yahweh's own consort. Instead of the diverse natural forms of Yahweh worship, there was only one legitimate form and one place of worship - the Temple at Jerusalem. This Yahweh-only tract has thus established Judaism in the ending of the Hebrew practice of small shrines and tabernacles dotted throughout the towns and countryside from time immemorial. Just as Marduk slew Tiamat, so the Yahweh-only movement slew the Asherah of fertility.

This coup is echoed in Exodus (34:13) with undertones of seduction of the sons of Israel:

"But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring

after their gods".

Although this would sound like the sad end of the story for the Queen of Heaven, it was only to be some 36 years later that Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and despite these attempts to expunge the weakness of whoring with the nations, the entire country was returned to being the vassal of a pagan civilization. Edom had continued to worship the Goddess and her consort, particularly in the high places such as Khirbet Tannur . With the emergence of the Nabateans, a whole stream of worship of the Queen of Heaven and her consort Duchares rose again to prominence to the east of the Jordan (Browning R92, Glueck R245).

Hosea's Plight and Jeremiah's Lament

This relationship, with a sexually jealous God, the ultimate alpha male at the head of the table of the gods, continues through the Old Testament, in repeated diatribes against whoring and harlots:

"And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more. So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet." (Ezekiel 16:41)

Hosea in the eighth century BC took it upon himself to purchase an unfaithful wife, who thus represented the archetype of Israel, the unfaithful wife of Yahweh. "Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley" (3:1).

He is clearly siding against the whoring of the Goddess which acts to disrupt the male inheritance lines of the patriarchal supporters of Yahweh:

"Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths" (2:2).

Regina Schwartz (R629) highlights the relation between pollution of the land and the image of the whore:

"In the Book of Hosea, two completely contradictory images of Israel's relation to the land are elaborated. The land is depicted as both a prostitute and a wilderness: as a prostitute, because Israel worships foreign gods; as a wilderness, to reflect the nomadic ideal of wandering over land, rather than owning it. Both metaphors depict a margin-a social one in which a woman is not an exclusive possession and a territorial one in which land is outside the boundaries of possession. One image is reviled the land as a prostitute violates the contract that Israel is the exclusive possession of Yahweh-while one is celebrated-the land as a wilderness depicts a nostalgic return to the birth of Israel. Born in the wilderness, the hope is that Israel will be reborn there. But we cannot plausibly read Hosea as a ringing endorsement of an unlanded ideal, for in the end, the period in the wilderness is cast as an interim, a precondition to reentering the cultivated land-the owned land-and when the woman is sent into the wilderness, it is hardly to acknowledge that she is not an object of possession. Instead, it is to purge her so that she can be more completely possessed".

That is why I am going to lure her
and bring her out into the wilderness
and speak to her heart.

I am going to give her back her vineyards,
and make the polluted valley a gateway of hope."
Then she will answer there, as in the days of her youth, and as
the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.
I will betroth you to me for ever.
Yes, I will betroth you with righteousness and in judgment,
with mercy and in compassion;
and I will betroth you to me in faithfulness,
and you shall know Yahweh.
And it shall be in that day-it is Yahweh who speaks-I will answer.
I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth,
and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and they shall answer jezreel.
I will sow her in the earth, I will love Unloved;
I will say to No-People-of-Mine, "You are my people,"
and he will answer, "You are my God." (Hos 2:14-23)

Hosea (4:9) further laments the wine and whoredom of the high places and the good shade of the sacred groves:

"and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom and not increase: because they have left of to take heed of the Lord. Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart. My people ask counsel to their stocks ... and they have gone a whoring from under their god. They sacrifice upon the mountain tops, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom and your spouses shall commit adultery. "

Yet he has Yahweh yet be tolerant for a time, in a way which later becomes lost:

"I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall" (4:14).

Jeremiah likewise laments Israel as the unfaithful wife:

"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (2:1).

"They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord" (3:1).

Jeremiah makes a more specifically social warning of vengeance:

"And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. ... Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not keep anger for ever" (3:8).

Schwartz (R629) notes the frenzy of 'sexual pollution':

"The link between sexuality and land pollution reaches a frenzied pitch in the obsession with that most heinous of offenses, prostitution: "Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute; thus, the land will not be prostituted and rifled with incest" (Lev 19:29). A body/land analogy governs the rhetoric that describes women and land as possessions (of one man/deity), women and land as faithful or idolatrous, women and land as monogamous or adulterous, women and land

as fertile or barren. But women and land are not only analogous; they become causes and effects in this system of monotheism/monogamy. When Israel worships a foreign deity, she is a harlot, the land is made barren, and she is ejected from the land."

She then quotes in Jeremiah (3:2) a fascinating slant on bedouin life of the times, echoing through to the Nabatea of Yeshua's times:

"Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with.
In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness;
and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness."

The second Isaiah (50:1) echoes this theme again:

"Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away".

Separatist Sentiments of the Exile

The exile brought with it a new sense of alienation and separation, as is characteristic if a small people in another culture adopt exclusive ways to protect their separateness and maintain it against the greater flux of 'foreign' ideas and genetic influences. Effectively the exile thus cemented what was to become the separatist path.

Ezekiel (8:1) writing during the exile laments at the things he suspects are going on back home in the temple:

"And I beheld and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of his loins even downward fire; and from his loins even upward as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And behold the glory of the god of Israel was there. Then I lifted my eyes ... and behold at the gate of the altar was the image of jealousy. Son of man seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel do here that I should go far from my sanctuary? In the temple "he saw every form of creeping things and abominable beasts and the idols of the house of Israel portrayed on the wall round about... and there stood before them seventy men of the ancients... and a thick cloud of incense went up. At the north door 'there sat women weeping for Tammuz' ... and in between the porch and the altar 'five and twenty men with their backs toward the temple facing the east and they worshipped the sun ... Therefore shall I deal in fury : mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity."

His prescription is an elaboration of Deuteronomy:

"Then shall thee know that I am the Lord when their slain men shall be among their idols round their altars, upon every high hill, in the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree and under every thick oak, , the place where they did offer sweet savour to their idols." (Exek 7:13).

Schwartz (R629) has cutting comment:

"Ezekiel 16, the extended allegory of Israel as a whore, brings the relation between whores, exile, and monotheism (adultery, defiled land, and idolatry) into sharp focus. It is the story of a child being born and growing up wild and unloved in the field, and when she matures into puberty, of her being owned, sexually and materially, by Yahweh."

"And I passed by you and I looked on you and behold, your time was the time of love. And I spread my skirt over you and I covered your nakedness. And I swore to you and I entered into a covenant with you and you became Mine. She is now washed, anointed, dressed, wrapped, covered, and adorned with silks, fine linen, embroidery, gold, and silver. And you were very beautiful and you advanced to regal estate. And your name went out among the nations, because of your beauty; for it was perfect, by My Splendor which I had set on you."

"But then young Israel commits adultery with the nations: with Egypt, Assyria, Canaan, Chaldea - with, not incidentally, all of Israel's enemies".

"At every head of the highway you have built your high place and have made your beauty despised, and have parted your feet to all who passed by, and have multiplied your fornications. You have whored with the sons of Egypt. . . . You have whored with the sons of Assyria without being satisfied. You have multiplied your fornication in the land of Canaan."

"But this adulteress has not, strictly speaking, been a harlot, for she has not taken wages; instead, she has done all the giving, even paying her lovers for their services. "The adulterous wife: instead of her husband, she takes strangers. They give a gift to an harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers, and bribe them to come to you from all around, for your fornication." Presumably, Israel the harlot would be superior to Israel the adulteress, for she would receive property instead of giving her property away, and that careful distinction offers a clue that, throughout this harangue against the adulteress, the issue is less sexual morality than ownership of property. The emphasis on property is underscored by the punishment of the adulteress. She will be stripped of her garments, of her wealth; Israel win be stripped naked and then brutally stoned and stabbed"

"Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness was bared, in your fornications with your lovers and the idols of your abominations ... therefore I will gather all your lovers with whom you have been pleased, even all whom you have loved with all whom you have hated, and I will uncover your nakedness to them, and they will see all your nakedness. ... They shall also strip you of your clothes and shall take your beautiful things and leave you naked and bare ... and they shall stone you with stones and cut you with their swords."

Schwartz sums up the situation: "Monotheism, then, is not simply a myth of one-ness, but a doctrine of possession, of a people by God, of a land by a people, of women by men".

I will give them a different heart so that they will always fear me. ... I will make an everlasting covenant with them; I will not cease in my efforts for their good, and I will put respect for me into their hearts, so that they turn from me no more. (Jer 32:39)

Ezekiel continues in this vein concerning cultural pollution (20:27):

"Your fathers have blasphemed me ... For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering; there they made also their sweet savour and poured out their drink offerings... Wherefore say unto the house of Israel Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations?"

Later in chapter 23 he relates the downfall of such women:

"there were two women, the daughters of one mother [Aholah of Samaria and Aholibah of Jerusalem]: and they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed and they bruised the teats of their virginity ... and poured their whoredom on her ... And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, the assyrians and her neighbours, which were clothed with blue ... with all their idols she defiled herself, neither she left her whoredoms brought from Egypt ... And Aholibah sent messages unto them in Chaldea ... and the Babylonians came to her in the bed of love... therefore I will bring [thy lovers] against thee on every side ... because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen and because thou art polluted with their idols... and with the men of a common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets on their hands, and beautiful crowns on their heads ... and so they went in" (23).

Israel After the Rains

When the Jews returned from the exile they were dismayed to find those who had stayed in the Holy Land had reverted to their old ways and intermarried with Canaanite wives. Those returning

disregarded the cultural accommodation of their compatriots and unilaterally imposed their own form of exilic separatism on Israel. Nevertheless the urban population was not so easily to be suppressed and invectives by Nehemiah indicate the post-exilic reforms were slow to take effect. But Ezra arrived in 397 BC and, in the pouring rain, delivered a diatribe that every man should sever his ties of love and marriage with the Canaanite women. At the same time the old Hebrew script was ironically replaced by Aramaic.

"There follows in this tenth and final chapter of Ezra a mass divorce and expulsion of children. Scores of Jewish man are listed by name, each of whom had married a non-Jewish woman and in some cases had children by her. All of these women and children are driven out" (Miles R474 379):

"Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do" (10:9)

Tobit 4:12 declares "take first a wife of the seed of thy fathers, and take not a strange wife which is not of thy father's tribe: for we are all sons of the prophets". The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs echoes this "take therefore thyself a wife without blemish or pollution, while yet thou art young and not of the race of strange nations". The Book of Jubilees goes so far as to invoke death by stoning for an Israelite who would give his daughter or sister to a Gentile, and the woman is to be burned to death, indicating the conservative position of the Essenes in the face of Greek influence in Jerusalem. However the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs in the first century BC concedes a stem from which "shall grow a rod of righteousness to the Gentile to judge and save all that call upon the Lord".

The Son of the Father and the Women of Galilee

There is a very strong streak of sacrificial violence merged into the concept of atonement - both the union of at-one-ment and a terrible penalty that has to be paid to God for the error of the people's ways, which is expressed in multiple places, from Psalm 22, to the 'just man' who is killed out of jealousy in Wisdom of Solomon 2:12-20 (p 227). The 'suffering servant' of Isaiah and the 'foolish shepherd' of Zechariah set the tone of the rejected messenger of doom whom the people reject or kill, only to find to their remorse he was their savior. Zechariah spoke of a final struggle against false ways surrounding the temple of Jerusalem, in a military and cosmic confrontation, splitting apart the entire world as then known.

Later traditions of Judaism became infused with such apocalyptic thought, emerging from the Zoroastrian cosmic renovation in a final struggle between dark and light. While in Persian thought this was a cleansing struggle between clarity and ignorance, in the Jewish apocalyptic context, it became a struggle between divine and malign forces of Belial, Prince of Darkness personified in Essene terms in the Wicked Priest. In the visions of the desert seers or nabis, such as Jokanaan (John the Baptist R664), it became a cosmic struggle between God and Satan, who was originally a tester of commitment to God, but had now become a dark force, into which the messianic hope was launched as a cosmic quest (Cohn R126, Pagels R524).

Nabatean Coinage of Conjoint Rulers: Aretas III, Obdias, Aretas IV and Huldu, Aretas IV and Shaqilat II.

Jokanaan's beheading takes place in a highly provocative sexual context. The lands of Edom and Moab had coalesced into the Kingdom of Nabatea, centered on Petra, a high peak of Arabic culture, based on irrigation, whose citizens worshipped the fertility goddess by various names, including al-Lat (goddess), Manat (fate), and al-Uzza (powerful) with her Dionysian(R521) consort Dhu Shara (R245) in the high places. Relative equality between female and male power was expressed in their coinage in the joint kingship and queenship of several of their Kings and Queens, including Aretas IV and Shaqilat II (p 221).

Salome - Beardsley (Wilde)

Early in his reign, Herod Antipas had married the daughter of King Aretas IV of Nabatea. However, on a visit to Rome he stayed with his half-brother Herod II and there fell in love with his wife, Herodias, (granddaughter of Herod the Great and Mariamne I), and the two agreed to marry, after Herod Antipas had divorced his wife. Josephus says rather that Herodia initiated the divorce "Herodias took upon her to confound the laws of our country, and divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, and was married to Herod Antipas". Herod Antipas thus deserted his marriage to the Nabatean Princess Phasaelis in favour of his cousin Herodias, who according to Mark and Matthew, was the wife of Herod's half-brother, Philip, tetrach of ItureaÂ andÂ Trachonitis. However history indicates it was Herod Philip II the previous tetrarch of this area, the son of Herod the Great by Mariamne, the daughter of Simon the High Priest, that married Herodias and whose daughter was Salome and that Philip the Tetrarch subsequently married Salome. Luke later dropped the reference to Philip. Princess Phasaelis took flight, fearing Herod would kill her and the Nabateans had in response declared war on Herod. Jokanaan then accused Herod and Herodias of adultery, and was imprisoned in the castle Machaerus on the Nabatean border, where Herod and his generals were holding a war cabinet (Flavius Josephus R350).

Thus begins the tale of Salome dancing what is presumed to have been the dance of the seven veils of Inanna's descent before the men for which Herod offered her half his kingdom in a clear reference to the descent, echoed in Esther 5:3 in claiming Haman's head:

"When the daughter of Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist." (Mark 6:22).

Jokanaan is thus killed as the substitute sacred king in the male sacrifice of Inanna's descent. Jokanaan's challenge and death signify the very arrow of cultural, religious and gender conflict. In Luke, Jokanaan talks in apocalyptic terms, using images of Tammuz and Ba'al:

"Whose [winnowing] fan is in his hand, he will thoroughly purge his floor,
and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."

This tale of infidelity had nefarious outcomes all round. Aretas IV invaded Herod Antipas' holdingsAntipas suffered a davastating defeat, partly because soldiers from the domain of Philip the Tetrarch (a third brother) changed sides. Antipas was forced to appeal to Tiberius for help. The emperor ordered Lucius Vitellius, governor of Syria, to march against Aretas and ensure that he was captured or killed. Vitellius mobilized two legions, sending them on a detour around Judea while he joined Antipas in attending the passover at Jerusalem. While staying there he learned of the death of Tiberius, concluded he lacked the authority to go to war, and recalled his troops and the invasion of Nabataea was never completed. The Christian Apostle, Paul, mentions that he had to sneak out of Damascus in a basket through a window in the wall to escape the ethnarch of King Aretas. Later Herodias' brother Agrippa, who became a frined of Caligula accused Antipas of amassing a trecherous army and he was exiled to Gaul. Herodias was offered to retain her estates, but chose to enter exile with Antipas. Neither is anything is known of Herod II after the divorce.

Yeshua (Jesus) brilliantly encompassed this confused cultural tradition of jealousy and endeavoured to unite the apocalyptic and fertility traditions in one renewal as a hybrid lord Adonai and mashiach. We explore his 'persona', as diversely described in orthodox and gnostic texts, the Talmud, and by historians. Upon his baptism by Jokanaan, the holy spirit descended on him in the form of (Aphrodite's) dove. He became the 'bridegroom' - the nominal consort of the sacred marriage, cryptically referred to in Isaiah 61, the unique 'black verses of god-anointing' which he read in liberation in the synagogue at Nazareth:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me ... to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ... as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. ... as a garden causes the things that are sewn in it to spring forth (Is 61)

Jesus now turns the tables, claiming the destiny of the prophets was to heal gentiles:

"But unto none of them was Elias [Elijah] sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow .And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus [Elisha] the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian".

For his challenge to the role of the 'elect' in espousing the 'lost sheep of Israel', Yeshua was nearly cast off the cliffs of Nazareth but passed through the angry crowd. The term 'messiah' comes from the Hebrew mashiach, meaning 'anointed one', as does 'christ'. The only places in the Bible where anointing occurs are those of priests anointing kings. Central to the anomaly of Yeshua is that he cited Isaiah 61 'blasphemously' and was anointed by a woman.

This set the stage for a mission of consorting, controversy, chaos and miraculous dread, from his mother's request to turn water into wine at the wedding at Cana on the day of the festival of Dionysus' epiphany (Ranke-Heinemann 1992) to the walking on water at Galilee.

And new wine is not put into old wineskins, lest they burst;
nor is old wine put into a new wineskin, lest it spoil it. (Thomas 47)

As the 'true vine' Yeshua espoused the ultimate fertility parable of the mustard seed:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1).

"Tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like." "It is like a mustard seed.
It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a great plant
and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky." (Thomas 20)

Nabatean fertility worship including astral goddess figure and lower cetre Dionysian (Dhu Shara) tragic mask with dolphins . Khirbet Tannur. Aretas IV and Shaqilat II share Nabatean coinage as partners (Glueck R245) A fertility goddess of vegetation was also prominent. The deities took on

Greek aspects after the reign of Atetas III, whoalso introduced Greek writing on their coinage.

This tradition of miraculous dread and chaos messiahship, whipping up controversy and committing frank blasphemy in breaking traditional taboos, is in no way a fulfillment of traditional ideas of the Jewish messiah. It falls into the orbit of Dhu Shara, Lord of Seir as mentioned in Genesis (33.14): "until I come unto my lord unto Seir", the Dionysian 'God of Gaia' of the vineyards of Edomite Nabatea . Their orgiastic festivals (Browning R92 47), involved "Rich food in plenty and strong wine without stint" (Glueck R245 166). Bar-Hebraeus quoted Psalm 12:8 of Nabatean women: "the wicked walk on every side while vileness is exalted among the sons of men." One can only surmise that Yeshua was attempting a cultural synthesis of all the religious currents in the greater Israelite backdrop, including a considerable degree of popular fertility worship, particularly among the women of the countryside, an aspect of the 'lost sheep of Israel'. Graves (R256) notes the Talmud babli Sanhedrin called Yeshua or Yeshu-ha-Notzri "Balaam the Lame", claiming he came from the wicked kingdom of Edom. Graves suggests Yeshua was lamed in the manner of sacred kings (Graves R257), echoed in Luke's "physician heal thyself":

"The Lexicon Talmudicum and Talmud babli Sanhedrin 106b, 43a, 51a and the Toldoth Jeshu states (Graves 1946 6, 1953 23, 288): Commentators refer to Jeshu-ha-Notzri [Jesus of Nazareth] by mention of the wicked kingdom of Edom, since that was his nation... he was hanged on a Passover eve. He was near to the kingdom [genealogically]. Balaam the lame was 33 years old when Pintias the Robber [Pontius Pilate] killed him... They say that his mother was descended from princes and rulers but consorted with carpenters. The Mishnah (Baraitha and Tosefta) note the following passages highlighting the tension between conventional Jews and Jesus' followers (Wilson I 62-4): "It has been taught: On the eve of the Passover they hanged Yeshu ... because he practised sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray ... Our Rabbis taught Yeshu had five disciples Mattai, Nakkai, Netzer, Buni, and Todah."

His miraculous reputation was however ephemeral and inversely related to familiarity, as is evidenced by his marginal performance in his home town of Nazareth:

"A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin,
and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work,
save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them" (Mark 6:4).

Such chaos messiahship extended from sending the hapless herd of pigs to their doom in the name of casting out spirits and a performance of feeding the five thousand morsels of loaves as communion wafers, capped by such apocalyptic blasphemy that many disciples deserted:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man,
and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:52).

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (6:56).

Yeshua restated central Jewish ethics, reversing Hillel's "Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you" quoted when he was asked to recite the Torah standing on one foot, into the affirmative "Do to others what you would they should do to you" (Matt 7:12). Both are significant moral advances on 'tit for tat' or 'an eye for an eye' in the prisoners' dilemma, because they are educative of good intent. Hillel stresses non-defection and non-violence but risks non-involvement; Yeshua asserts cooperation, risking coercion.

Yeshua took this further into a naked altruism, going far beyond mutuality, or reciprocation, setting a 'standard' of almost sacrificial giving to the defector in the face of evolutionary and social survival, which only God, or those taking a quick exit, can really 'afford':

> Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
> But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek,
> turn to him the other also. (Matt 5:38)

'Always cooperate' is one of the most rapidly eliminated prisoners' dilemma strategies. The evolutionary value of love is its capacity to unite in a win-win of good will and empathy that goes far beyond the boundaries of kin and 'self-serving' reciprocation, so embracing selfless love is a high ethical ideal, conducive to loving cooperation. But is every form of love which is sensitive to, or conditional on, a loving response simply to be equated with the divisiveness of sin?

"Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; ... For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? ... But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:27).

In Isaiah 61, we hear jubilaic mention of both the bridegroom and the bride, but during Yeshua's mission the bridegroom has assumed a lone role as an apocalyptic sacred king:

"And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days" (Mark 2:19)

Several passages in the Gospel of Thomas continue this trend:

> "Many are standing at the door, but it is the solitary who will enter the bridal chamber." (75)
> They said to Jesus, "Come, let us pray today and let us fast."
> Jesus said, "What is the sin that I have committed, or wherein have been defeated?"
> But when the bridegroom leaves "the bridal chamber, then let them fast and pray." (104)

In John, Jokanaan in a later Christian construction, 'prophesies' a sacred marriage:

"Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." (3:28)

The real support for Yeshua's mission and the disciples came always from the women:

"and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance" (Luke 8:1).

The Greek version's 'them' infers the 12 were supported by the women (Walker R721).

Magdalen's 'seven devils' hark directly to the seven galla of Inanna and the descent and link her allegorically to the role of the 'sinner' as 'sacred whore'.

Although Yeshua's sexual life remains enigmatic, he is said to have "loved Mary and her sister Martha". His role with Mary suggests the sacred union, although it is the Descent:

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41).

He is implicated in the hieros gamos with Salome in the Gospel of Thomas (Robinson R589):

"Jesus said, 'Two will rest on a bed: the one will die, and the other will live.'

Salome said, 'Who are you, man, that you ... have come up on my couch and eaten from my table?' Jesus said to her, 'I am he who exists from the undivided'. ... 'Therefore I say, if he is destroyed he will be filled with light, but if he is divided, he will be filled with darkness'." (61)

This suggests he is claiming to speak from the 'whole' condition before Adam and Eve became twain, and is a key part of his attitude to marriage, which has steered Christianity and Western culture in the direction of monogamy ever since.

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.
For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;
And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.
What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mark 10:6).

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her
hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt 5:27).

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife,
saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery:
and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Luke 16:18, Matt 5:32).

Jesus then refers to 'eunuchs for heaven' in a way which caused Origen and some cult followers to castrate themselves, but Uta Ranke-Heinemann (R564 23) has pointed out this was not about intercourse, but remarriage - men curtailing their polygynous tendencies.

"His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." (Matt 19:10).

This is a far cry from the delightful invocation to be ravished by the breasts of the young wife in Proverbs, which is positively sexual in the Jewish fertility tradition, although condemning the strange woman's equally enticing ways. Here sexuality has become confined and negative outside the invocation to cleave to one's wife as one flesh. Sexual pleasure is denied. Even to appreciate a woman sexually is evil. Remarriage after divorce has become adulterous and the emphasis, even if it is not on physical castration, is on psychic castration. While physical divorce is banned, we now have a divorce between sexual pleasure and god-ordained reproduction which will wrack the Christian community for two millennia.

His statement "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:57) echoes this second Adamic claim.

Healing destiny is in turn achieved by making the two sexes one in an 'Edenic' reunion:

"When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female; and when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness, then will you enter [the kingdom]" (Thomas 22)

In a patriarchal twist, Jesus asserts that making woman 'male' is the route to the kingdom:

"Simon Peter said to them, 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven'." (114)

In 'Stromata' Clement of Alexandria claims that in the lost Gospel According to the Egyptians, when Shelom [Salome] asked how long death would prevail Yeshua replied "So long as you women bear children" to which she replies "Then I have done well in not bringing forth." When she asked when the kingdom would come, he replied: "When you women have trampled the garment of shame, when the two become one, and when the male with the female is neither male nor female" and in the same gospel he said "I have come to destroy the works of the female" (Graves R256).

The Dialogue of the Saviour, also originating in the first century, conveys these sentiments:

"The Lord said: 'Pray in the place where there is no woman'.
Matthew said: 'meaning Destroy the works of womanhood,
not because there is any other [manner of birth] but because they will cease [giving birth]'." (91)

We can see extensions of this idea in the following two passages, firstly in Thomas again trampling the garments of shame in returning to the child-like state:

"When will you become revealed to us and when shall we see you?" Jesus said, "When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your garments and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then [will you see] the son of the living one, and you will not be afraid" (37).

When describing the after-life Yeshua is said in a possible orthodox redaction to have portrayed a sexless heaven, in which 'original lubricity' is replaced by sexless immortality:

"And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:34).

The female mother in opposition to the father god appears again in Thomas:

"He who knows the father and the mother will be called the son of a harlot" (105).

"When you see one who was not born of woman,
prostrate yourselves on your faces and worship him. That one is your father" (15).

Although these hark back to the undivided Adam, they have the strained sentiments of a male messiah who is engaging the feminine tradition, while in the same motion, trying to overthrow it, in a misguided attempt to undo the perceived sins of Eve and the entire reproductive biological paradigm. We cannot thus see Yeshua as a feminist, nor even the 'gylanic' figure of 'partnership society' Eisler (R183) suggests, but rather an ingenious, yet tortured masculine attempt to encompass all traditions, and force the hour of doom as noted in Graves (R256 343-4) citing the very verse in Isaiah preceding Yeshua's Nazareth reading:

Mary: "His fault was this - he tried to force the hour of doom by declaring war on the female.
But the female abides and cannot be hastened."
Shelom: "Peace woman - Is it not written of the Kingdom of God
"I the Lord will hasten it in his time"

His negative attitudes to family contrast sharply with his Edenic view of innocent children:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

"For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and daughter in law against mother in law. And a man's foes shall be of his own household" (Matt 10:35).

"Whoever does not hate his father and mother cannot become a disciple to me. And whoever does not hate his brothers and sisters and take up his cross in my way will not be worthy of me" (Thom 55).

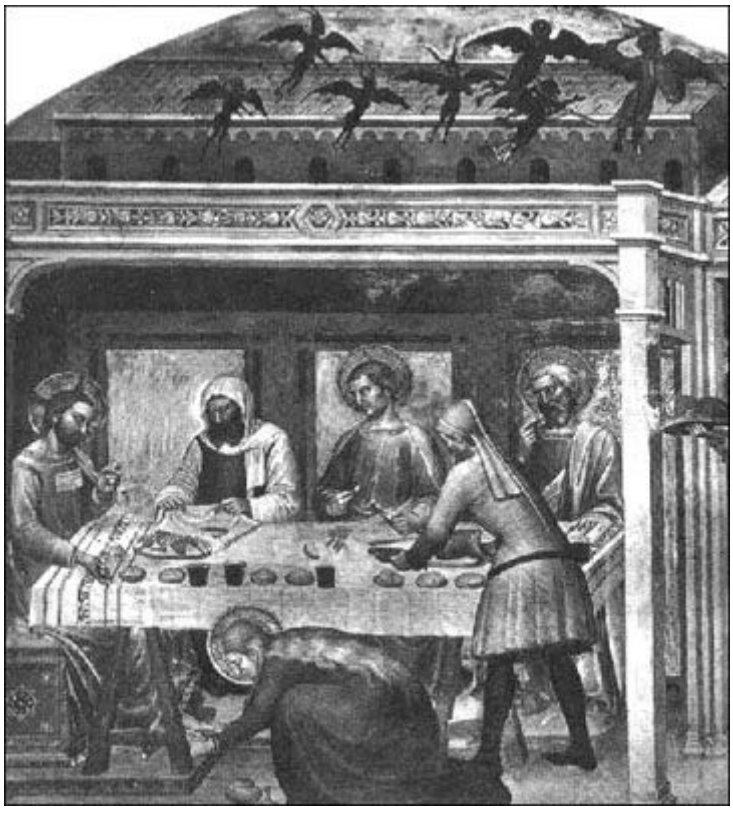
Yeshua describes himself as a winebibber and friend of publicans in a manner reminiscent of Ishtar, declaring feminine wisdom to be the arbiter:

"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:33).

In the following passage he preaches love for a weeping 'sinner' or 'sacred prostitute' who anoints his feet with ointment, washing his feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair:

"And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven" (7:44).



The 'sinner' anoints Christ's feet while seven galla emerge - Giovanni de Milano (Haskins R297).

In a parallel event, he liberated the woman taken in adultery, sometimes also identified with Magdalen, exposing the male accusers:

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7).

He was anointed again by Mary of Bethany sometimes identified also with Magdalen:

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" (John 12:3).

When Judas protests at the profligate waste, Jesus replies "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this". In a closely parallel account he is anointed on the head by a woman in a traditional gesture of messiahship:

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves ... And Jesus said, Let

her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always (Mark 14:3).

According to Margaret Starbird (R661, R662), this 'nard' although formally an aromatic root, is from the enclosed vaginal garden of paradise, hinting at the priestess as a 'sacred prostitute'. In both cases the anointing is a provocation to imminent betrayal.

In John (12:23), Jesus declares himself to be resurrecting grain of Tammuz, gaining immortality just as Dhu Shara gained immortality by donning the tragic mask:

"The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal"

The crucifixion reads as a carefully crafted Dionysian tragedy performed with Shakesperian subtlety. Yeshua has carefully organized many details in advance, arranged by code word, including the ass and the room for the last supper. He passes the sop to Judas in a ritual division of the twelve into a sacrificial paschal lamb and a scapegoat 'betrayer'.

He enters Jerusalem as sacred fertility king heralded by palm leaves and makes to overturn the tables in the Temple in the tradition of Zechariah's foolish shepherd, thus provoking the high priests to accuse him of the original charge of blasphemy and the Romans to try him for insurrection. He is seized in an Edenic garden, the disciples scattering like sheep, with Peter denying him the ritual three times. The High priests, to avoid committing him to death themselves, pass him over and he is shipped backwards and forwards between Herod and Pilate, neither of whom wish to be saddled with responsibility for his provocation, but become very good friends over the exchange (Luke 23:12). When Pilate asks Yeshua does he claim to be king, he can find no fault when Jesus replies:

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world,
that I should bear witness unto the truth."

Barabbas, whose ritual name means 'the son of the father', a title noted in other Saturnalia in the region, is offered in his place as scapegoat three times by Pilate, but the high priests say"We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15), and the crowd cries "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt 27:25), sealing the process of the accusation of blasphemy, as recorded in the Talmud:

"On the eve of Passover they hung Jesus of Nazareth. And the herald went out before him for 40 days [saying, 'Yeshua] goes forth to be stoned, because he has practiced magic, enticed and led astray Israel. Anyone who knows anything in his favor, let him come and declare concerning him.' And they found nothing in his favor."

As confirmed in the many accounts of threatened stoning by the Judeans in the gospels:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am".
Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple,
going through the midst of them, and so passed by (John 8:57).

"I and my Father are one".
Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. ...
For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy;
and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.(John 10:30).

Yeshua's reply to this accusation casts him into the blood-shedding, Josephic Northern tradition of Galilean Israel (Schonfield), rather than the Judaism of Herodian Judea. He refers to Abba among the congregation of the gods: "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" (p 208) - only to die like one of the princes.

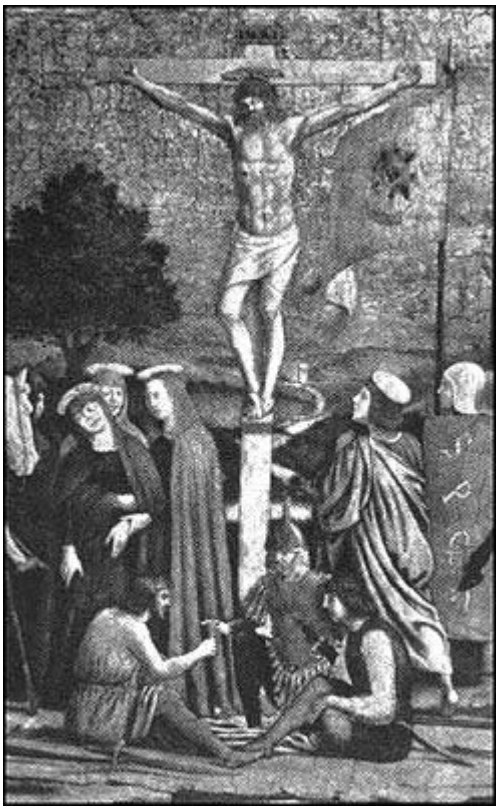
Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,
And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

Finally he returns to Judea, Lazarus and the sacred tragedy of a death for a life:

Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.
Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? (11:8)

He is subjected to the Saturnalia, variously by the Roman soldiers, or earlier by Herod's men. His reed sceptre is broken and he is 'set to nought' in an intimation of ritual castration and arrayed in 'royal' garbs and marched to Golgotha, lamented by the women in the manner of Tammuz, to which Yeshua utters the apocalyptic curse against female birth:

"There followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." (Luke 23:28).



The three women at the crucifixion, with the men casting lots on the vesture (Francesca)

It is noted in Matt 27:32 that immediately after the humiliation "as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross." According to Basilides, Christ changed places with Simon of Cyrene and then mingled with the crowd of onlookers, while Simon carried the cross, bore it to the hill, drank the gall and vinegar and was crucified. The 'Second Treatise of the Great Seth', a revelation dialogue allegedly delivered by Jesus, says (Robinson R589 365, Pagels R522 91):

"It was another, their father who drank the gall and vinegar; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another on whom they placed the crown of thorns,. But I was rejoicing in the height ... and I was laughing at their ignorance."

Having been given the title "King of the Jews" by Pilate he is then crucified, has his abdomen pierced in a focal confirmation of Zechariah's prophecy (12:10):

"and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,
and they shall mourn for him,
as one mourneth for his only son."

He utters the cry of Psalm 22: "El El why have you forsaken me?"

In the tradition of the Wisdom of Solomon (2:12-20):

Let us lie in wait for the righteous man,
because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions;
he reproaches us for our sins against the Law,
and accuses us of sins against our training.
He professes to have knowledge of God,
and calls himself a child of the Lord ...

Let us see if his words are true,

and let us test what will happen at the end of his life;
for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him,
and deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.
Let us test him with insult and torture,
that we may find out how gentle he is,
and make trial of his forbearance.
Let us condemn him to a shameful death,
for, according to what he says, he will be protected.

This cycle of jealous oppression of the 'just man' is a sacrificial rite, echoing the Descent, but denuded of its hieros gamos fertility - a death of sacrificial atonement dedicated to the jealous God - again lamented in Isaiah's 'suffering servant':

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and
acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he
was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we
did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our
iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him;
and with his stripes we are healed.
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his
mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before
her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.
He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare
his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for
the transgression of my people was he stricken (53).

The fragmentary Gospel of Peter says Yeshua was as silent in just this way:

"And they brought two criminals and crucified the Lord between them.
But he himself remained silent, as if in no pain" (4:1).

He then succumbs so precipitously that Pilate 'marvels', suggesting he could possibly have survived the 'Passover plot' (Schonfield R623, Graves and Podro R260).

"And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.
And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mark 15:37).

The feminine veil of the temple is rent - the marriage is consummated and the hymen is broken. The women of Galilee, who somehow have come down to the passover, knowing the Lord they have given their 'substance' to is performing the descent, all look on from far off including a triple of three key women.

"There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem" (Mark 15:40).

He is then laid in the sepulchre by Joseph of Arimathea followed by the women:

"And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments" (Luke 23:55).

Yeshua was sacrificed in the presence of the women and not the male disciples, who have fled, they are the last to be with him in the sepulchre and the first to return after the sabbath, variously described as Mary Jacobe, Mary Salome and Mary Magdalen:

"And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him" (Mark 16:1).

"Noli me Tangere" echoes the sacred sexual union of the Song of Songs (R755).

He is exulted as risen on the third day after harrowing hell, as in Inanna's descent, by Magdalen alone, who in an allegory of the second Adam mistakes Yeshua for the 'gardener' and recites the searching lament for Adonis and Tammuz (John 20:13):

"And they say unto her, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' She saith unto them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' Jesus saith unto her, 'Mary'. She turned herself, and saith unto him, 'Rabboni'. Jesus saith unto her, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended' " .

As echoed in the Song of Songs (p 479):

"I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer"

Magdalen then conveys the exultation of the 'risen Christ' to the male disciples:

"Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord,
and that he had spoken these things unto her "(John 20:18).

Luke confirms the central role of Magdalen, although derided by Peter and the apostles:

"It was Mary Magdalen and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." (24:10) .

Yeshua declares Magdalen's name shall be told:

"Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt 26:13)

Apostola Apostolorum: Magdalen announcing
the resurrection Albani Psalter b 1123 (Haskins R297).

In the orthodox account, Yeshua was styled as the one and only apocalyptic male hero of cosmic renovation in the Essene and Zoroastrian vision who shall come again in the final apocalyptic crisis, the only begotten son of God, sacrificed in tragic 'atonement' so that, in believing in him, we shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

The notion of the bridegroom continues after the crucifixion in the messianic hope. In Luke we are reminded to wait on the Lord as a returning bridegroom (12:35):

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

In Mark the hope is embodied in the bridegroom:

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.... While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the five foolish said unto the five wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not

enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (25:1).

In the synoptics Peter declares Yeshua to be the apocalyptic Christ:

"He saith unto them, 'But whom say ye that I am?'
And Simon Peter answered and said,
'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matt 16:15).

But in the Gospel of Thomas, rather than declaring himself messiah, Yeshua makes the inscrutable reply of a gnostic teacher:

"'Compare me to someone and tell me whom I am like'.
Simon Peter said to him, 'You are like a righteous angel.'
Matthew said to him, 'You are like a wise philosopher.'
Thomas said to him, 'Master, my mouth is wholly incapable of saying whom you are like.'
Jesus said 'I am not your master. Because you have drunk,
you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out'" (13).

Yet in one of the most intimate of his gnostic statements he is the 'all' and is everywhere:

"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." (77)

And rather than a kingdom in the heavens, he declares it is the natural world before us:

"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" (3).

"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).

The initial group which gathers before Pentecost still contains the women, although Peter chauvinistically mentions only the males:

"When they were come in, they went up into an upper room... The [apostles] all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled" (Acts 1:13).

This delicate relationship between Peter and the disciples, the women and the desposyni - Yeshua's family, headed by James, continues to the Pentecostal revelation, which is a prophecy based on sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens - males and females together:

" And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.... And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.... which was spoken by the prophet Joel. 'and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your

old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy'." (Acts 2:1).

Pentecost is really a three-way schism and parting of the ways between three paths 'ordained' by Yeshua: the following of Mary Magdalen and the 'women' [Matt 26:13], the Hebrew Christians headed by Yeshua's brother James the Just [Thomas 12] (Eisenman R182), and Peter's death-cursing brand of Christian communism [Matt 16:18, Acts 5:5], which was overtaken by Pauline born-again 'paganism'. The women now vanish from the synoptic account and from this early time on, in orthodox Christianity, women have been barred from the Church, ostensibly because they carry the earthly principle of 'carnal sin' through which Eve's wiles drew Adam and us all into a 'life of death', despite Christ's redeeming act. The gnostic Christians professed to carry the inner illumination of Yeshua's teaching. Some took their tradition directly from Magdalen, Martha and Salome and were notable for the equal status accorded to the genders. By 200 AD Irenaeus was complaining that women were still celebrating the Eucharist with the gnostic teacher Marcus and the gnostic sects were repressed.

John is noted as being a 'gnostic' gospel despite inclusion in the canon, although it has been cast in opposition to the egalitarian gnosticisn of Thomas (Pagels R525). Of all the Gospels, John carries Yeshua into the heights as logos, only -begotten. It is John who repeatedly cast aspertions on Thomas as doubting the unique power of Christ. Brown (R90 149) suggests that the originating group (50-80 AD) of the community was led by Mary Magdalen but that there was a schism early in the Johannine Community. She was highly esteemed as the primary witness to the resurrection and recognized as such even by believers who did not belong to this particular community. She was known, very early on, as the 'companion of Jesus' Later (c 90-100 AD), the claim that a female disciple of Jesus had been their community's first leader and hero became an embarrassment. Jusino (R352) thus suggests John's gospel is a sexually redacted version of an original gospel of Magdalen.

Mary Magdalen's enigmatic nature remains. Some scholars believe that the name Magdalene is the Greek rendering of the Aramaic word m'gad'lla meaning 'hairdresser' (Graves R256, Graves and Podro R258). Women practising this profession were regarded among the Jews as ladies of easy virtue. Magdalen 'alone stands out undefined by a designation attaching her to some male as wife, mother, or daughter and she is the only one to be identifiable by her place of birth'. Magdalini in Greek signified her belonging to el Mejdel (Migdal tower for 'fish tower') a prosperous fishing village on Galilee, destroyed in 75 AD because of its infamy and the licentious behaviour of its inhabitants (Haskins R297 15). A tiny desolate dome shrine marks the site. Starbird (R662) refers to her as magal eder the tower of the flock.

"And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (Micah 4:8).

This is also tied up with mother Mary's ambiguous figure as an unmarried mother. It is quite clear that Yeshua's parentage was a source of concern to early Christians and of satirical derision from the Rabbis. Matthew 1:19 confesses: "Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily". The Talmud claims that Jesus was Yeshua ben Pantera the illegitimate son of Mary M'gadd'la (the braider or hairdresser) by a Roman (Graves and Podro R258 98, Wilson R755 62) and that she was 'descended from princes and rulers but consorted with carpenters' (Graves R256 6). Pantera is a Roman surname known from the archaelogical record (Wilson R755). In Matthew, Yeshua's descent is reckoned through four 'loose' women: Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba and Ruth. In addition to the 'virgin birth', star, magi, and slaughter of the innocents, the infancy legends are permeated with fertility paganism. Bethlehem is 'the House of Bread' (Frazer R222 5/257). St. Jerome stated that: "Bethlehem ... lay formerly under the shadow of a grove dedicated to Tammuz [the grain god], that is to say Adonis, and the very grotto where the infant Christ uttered his first cries resounded formerly with the lamentations over the lover of Aphrodite" (Briffault R76 3/97).

In early and medieval lore Mary Magdalen is represented as a beautiful and meretricious woman, a witch and a whore. In many gnostic texts she is the companion of Jesus and is with him on several

important occasions. In one curious case, however, Mary is not present, and this is during an event of especial significance. Before the last supper Jesus called his disciples together and asked them for the bread and the cup to bless them. At that moment Mary Magdalen laughed, whereupon Jesus asked all the women to leave (Walker R721).

There is still greater confusion about the Salomes. One Salome appears in the 'infancy gospels' as a midwife and is the first to recognize him as the Christ. Traditionally, Salome is the name given to the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John. Then we have the beautiful sixteen-year old daughter of Herodias and step-daughter of Herod Antipas the tetrarch. In a popular tradition current at the time she, like her mother, had lusted after John the Baptist and had been spurned by him, leading to the beheading (Wilde R745). Another is mentioned in the Gospel to the Egyptians (p 223), who appears to be childless, and in Thomas Yeshua 'comes up' on Salome's couch (p 223). To add to the confusion, she is sometimes referred to as Mary Salome. The only Salome mentioned in the Bible is watching the crucifixion from afar off, and coming after the entombment to anoint the body (Walker R721).

The apocryphal Coptic Book of the Resurrection of Christ, attributed to the apostle Bartholomew, names the women who went to the tomb. Among them were: Mary Magdalen; Mary the mother of James whom Jesus delivered out of the hand of Satan; Mary who ministered to him; Martha her sister; Joanna (Susanna) who renounced the marriage bed; and 'Salome who tempted him.' It would seem that some time after she had contrived the beheading of John the Baptist, Salome may have tried to use her wiles to tempt Jesus, but became his follower, and like Mary Magdalen remained close to him thereafter.

Satan and the Male Combat of Dark and Light

We can't leave this arena without dealing with a new apocalyptic form of the 'jealous god' in the form of the ultimate male combat myth - the polarization of the entire universe into light and dark in the contest between God and Satan. Male combat is as central to sexual jealousy, as are the ancient invocations against whoring in the Old Testament. It is also central to some of the most diabolical manifestations of Christianity in terms of treating the 'other' in any form of perceived deviation as agents of the Devil.

Although Satan has a historical precedent in the Zoroastrian cleansing final conflict between the forces of dark and ignorance and those of light, he emerges first in Jewish writings as a kind of tester of faith in Yaweh, and only later gains the aura of being God's nemesis as a rebel leader of the fallen angels, leading to a final apocalypse.

Elaine Pagels (R524) notes:

"What fascinates us about Satan is the way he expresses qualities that go beyond what we recognize as human. Satan evokes more than the greed, envy lust and anger we identify with our own worst impulses and more than what we call brutality which imputes to human beings a resemblance to animals ... Thousands of years of tradition have characterized Satan instead as a spirit. ... Many people have claimed to see him embodied at certain times in individuals and groups that seem possessed by an intense spiritual passion, one that engages even our better qualities, like strength, intelligence and devotion, but turns them towards destruction and takes pleasure in inflicting harm. ... I invite you to consider Satan as a reflection of how we perceive ourselves and those we call 'others'. Satan has after all made a kind of profession out of being the 'other', and so Satan defines negatively what we think of as being human. The social and cultural practice of defining certain people as 'others' in relation to one's group may of course be as old as humanity itself. ... Conflict between groups is of course nothing new. What may be new in the Western Christian tradition ... is how the use of Satan to represent one's enemies lends to conflict a specific kind of moral and religious interpretation, in which 'we' are God's people and 'they' are God's enemies, and ours as well ... aspects of Christianity I find disturbing ... [revealing] certain fault lines in the Christian tradition that have allowed for the demonizing of others throughout Christian history - fault lines that go back nearly two thousand years to the origins of the Christian movement."

This brings us full circle to the question of genetic competition, jealousy, male combat and Alexander's theory of morality (p 44) as a solidarity within groups to make them more effective at inter-group conflict.

Although there are relatively few direct references to Satan in the synoptic gospels, only one in John and none in those of Thomas or Mary, Yeshua's mission is strongly polarized between light and dark forces and the advent of the Kingdom is bound up in a powerfully dualistic way between the actions of players perceived to be on the dark side, such as Judas, the high priests, scribes and Herodians, in John the 'Jews'; with the Pharisees, certain Samaritan villages, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and sometimes the disciples, caught somewhere in the middle; while the lone figure of Yeshua, a 'fox without a hole', bears the light, while issuing such provocation and controversy that it is hard to tell which side, dark, or light, is the active agent in the escalating confrontation.

This carries over to the Crucifixion, where virtually all the players are implicated, Judas for betraying Yeshua, when savagely provoked by the sop and the profligate female anointing 'for my burial', the High priests when Yeshua assaults the temple sufficiently to cause them to fear Roman intervention (John 11:47), Pilate when the situation overtakes him, and despite protesting he can 'find no fault' washes his hands of him, the Jewish crowd who called for his blood saying 'whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar', Satan who is waiting to figuratively gash him from the pinnacles, and finally God who is about to sacrifice his only begotten Son so that 'all who believe in Him should not perish but', despite this homicide 'have everlasting life' in the sacraments of flesh and blood. Or is it Yeshua himself who brought this all upon us, however ingeniously and prophetically?

Ever since, for Christians, Satan and the Jews have been implicated together while Yeshua and God have been cleared of any crime. Jews consider Yeshua and Satan are implicated but the they still have God on their side. Yet why was this killing necessary? As Elaine Pagels notes in her historical analysis, these times were apocalyptic and led directly towards the siege and sacking of Jerusalem, which was one of the most genocidal episodes in classical history, but is this a standard by which to set our paradigm of survival?

The direct references to Satan begin with Yeshua's forty days in the desert, where he is challenged to perform miracles, tempted with worldly power and challenged to tempt death off the Temple to see if he will be saved - something he later does in overturning the tables:

"And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1:13).

"Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. 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. 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." (Luke 4:2).

In a second passage Yeshua curses the unwelcoming cities to be thrust down to hell claiming that anyone who rejects him or the disciples are also enemies of God. The seventy revel in wielding power over the devils and Yeshua gives them miraculous power to tread on scorpions. We thus have a complete role reversal. 'Power over' is now assumed in just the way Satan offered, but here it is 'with God on our side':

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:13).

Yeshua as much as admits this conflict is one of fragmentation, when accused by the scribes of being Ba'al Zebul, Lord of the Flies, for using diabolical means of exorcism:

"And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end" (Luke 3:22)

Yeshua's point is a direct confirmation of Alexander's position (p 44). Unity within the group is necessary for effective competition or final combat with the 'other.' Neither is it clear that infirmities, whether psychic or physical are 'devils' but natural maladies, even if amenable to powerful forms of faith healing.

Peter is even accused of being possessed by Satan for the 'humanity' of questioning the self-destructive act, so similar to the one Satan tempted Yeshua perform from the pinnacles:

"And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Mark 8:31).

Finally we have Judas' betrayal, and the only passage in John to refer directly to Satan:

Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? (6:70)

"And after the sop Satan entered into him.
Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly" (13:27).

Hereafter I will not talk much with you:
for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me (14:30).

Pagels (R524 100) notes: "Casting the struggle between good and evil as that between light and darkness, John never pictures Satan as the other gospels do, appearing as a disembodied being. ... John ... tells the whole story of Jesus as a struggle with Satan that culminates in the crucifixion. ... Although John never depicts Satan as a character on his own, acting independently of human beings, it is people who play the tempter's role."

In the key passage in John declaring he is the only-begotten son, the war is between dark and light in a pure Zoroastrian sense. The darkness of evil also seeks to hide its deceptions, lest it be reproved, but the light of truth declares itself openly that its deeds be manifest. So too for knowing (gnosis) and ignorance. This is the prisoners' dilemma of defection and cooperation crying out across the aeons:

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (3:17).

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day:
the night cometh, when no man can work.
As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world (9:4).

"His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." (11:8)

Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth (12:35).

This theme of the tangled violence between the light in the 'party of God' and the darkness in the 'evil empire' continues throughout Christian and Western history. Firstly in the era of martyrdom in perceiving that the pagans who persecuted them were agents of the devil, then dangerously turning the 'other' into 'self', the heretics in the Christian midst:

Paul, who was martyred for his convictions, saw the problem of evil arising both in the political sphere of world powers, and extending even to the heavens:

"Our contest is not against flesh and blood [humans] but against powers,
against principalities, against the world rulers of this present darkness,
against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12)

However the enemy within was even more of a subtle threat, illustrating that the ultimate danger of the whole concept of evil is that, as Yeshua said, it splits every which way:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor 11:13).

This dance with the Devil continued on through Crusade, Inquisition, Witch Hunt, Shoah, World Wars, Nuclear confrontation by 'mutually assured destruction', even to the self-contradictory war on terror.

Samael's Jealousy and Thunder's Perfection

Gnosticism (gnosis meaning 'primal knowing') is a partially ascetic contemplative movement that both precedes and succeeds Christianity. Gnostic Christians had a much more multifaceted view of divinity in which God was among other things revealed as a demiurge who assumed dictatorial power over the primal silence, the feminine spirit of Wisdom in Sophia. We have only been able to discover the richness and complexity of the Gnostic Christian visions because a sect which was being repressed in the second century hid its works in jars at Nag Hammadi only to be discovered by the world nearly two millennia later.

Among these the Gospel of Thomas 70-150 CE contains older forms of source saying parallel to the author Q who forms a basis for several synoptics. (Pagels R522, Robinson R589). The Gospel of Thomas was most likely composed in Syria, where tradition holds the church of Edessa to have been founded by Judas Thomas, 'The Twin' (Didymos). Pagels (R522) proposes that the Gospel of Thomas is an avenue to the transcendent 'Christ state', shared in a twinning with all. The gospel opens declaring these are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke which Thomas wrote down: The first declares the sayings are the key to life:

"Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death."

echoing John's "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." The next saying is more specific and suggests full illumination in power:

"Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the all."

The very idea of such illumination will later become heresy punishable by death.

Many gnostics saw the world as a dualistic one, in which the darkness of matter, a product of the demiurge bound them from spiritual liberation and the light, and in Manichaeism, females and sexuality were seen as physical snares and contributed indirectly to the monastic tradition. Such movements regarded procreation as to be avoided to prevent the spirit being again entrapped in the flesh. They thus embraced contraception.

Thomas echoes the derogation of the flesh and the physical:

Jesus said, "If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a wonder.
But if spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders.
Indeed, I am amazed at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty" (29).

Jesus said, "Whoever has come to understand the world has found (only) a corpse,
and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world" (56).

Jesus said, "Wretched is the body that is dependent upon a body,
and wretched is the soul that is dependent on these two" (87).

Certain of the gnostics, including Valentinus, Marcion, and the Carpocratians had relatively liberated attitudes to sexual relationship, morality, and particularly to sexual equality in the church, to the ire of the orthodox bishops. Occhigrosso (R511 302) even describes the consolidation of the synoptic canon as a reaction to the gnosticism of Marcion which rejected the gospels as misrepresenting Yeshua's vision of a god of love rather than fear, quite distinct from the Old Testament God, whom Marcion considered an inferior being. The gnostic group following Carpocrates, headed by a female bishop Marcellina, claimed a secret tradition going back to Mary, Martha and Salome.

In the Dialogue of the Saviour, which, like the Gospel of Thomas, contains traditional sayings in archaic form and has a possible date of origin in the first century are several passages emphasizing the key role of Mary in her depth of understanding and revelation of his inner message as one who had understood completely (Robinson R589 252):

Mary said: "Tell me Lord why have I come to this place, to profit or to forfeit"
The Lord said "You make clear the abundance of the revealer!" (60)

Mary said "I want to understand all things just as they are",
Mary utters "There is but one saying I will speak to the Lord concerning the mystery of truth:
In this we have taken our stand and to the cosmic we are transparent" (69) .

As noted, signs of the division noted firstly in the exaltation are apparent in the Gospel of Thomas a tension between Peter (the orthodox) and Mary Magdalen (the gnostic).

'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.'

The tension between Mary and Peter continues in the later Gospel of Mary:

"Peter said to Mary, "Sister, we know that the Savior loved you more than the rest of women. Tell us the words of the Savior which you remember - which you know (but) we do not, nor have we heard them." Mary answered and said, "What is hidden from you I will proclaim to you." And she began to

speak to them. ... When Mary had said this, she fell silent, since it was to this point that the Savior had spoken with her. But Andrew answered and said to the brethren, "Say what you (wish to) say about what she has said. I at least do not believe that the Savior said this. For certainly these teachings are strange ideas." Peter answered and spoke concerning these same things. He questioned them about the Savior: "Did he really speak with a woman without our knowledge (and) not openly? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?" Then Mary wept and said to Peter, "My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Savior?" Levi answered and said to Peter, "Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us" (Robinson R589 524).

In the Valentinian Gospel of Philip, Magdalen is called Christ's 'companion' (Gk koinonos partner) the most important of the three women "who were always with the Lord".

"But Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on the mouth. ... They said to him, why do you love her more than all of us? ... Jesus said 'when the light comes, he who sees will see the light, but he who is blind will remain in darkness'" (Robinson R589 148, Haskins R297 40).

In the Pistis Sophia Mary warns "Peter makes me hesitate, I am afraid of him because he hates the female race" (Walker R721 791, Haskins R297 42). When she asks him if she may speak in boldness Jesus replies: "Mariham Mariham, the happy, this shall I complete in all the mysteries of ... the Height. Speak in boldness because thou art she whose heart straineth toward the Kingdom of the heavens more than all thy brothers." When she says she has comprehended every word, he marvels because she has become spirit quite pure (R297 50-1).

In a later apocryphal tradition, Mary Magdalen, along with sister Martha, brother Lazarus, Mary the wife of Cleophas who was the half-sister of the Virgin Mary, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Mary Salome, were all washed up on the shores of Provence in a rudderless boat, after they had fled persecution in the Holy Land. Various forms of this myth have the two Marys and a little black madonna Sarah also called Sara Kali, as celebrated at Saintes Marie de la Mer, thought to have been an Egyptian but also suggested to have been the child of Yeshua and Magdalen from their sacred union (Starbird R661 60).

In teachings attributed to Marcus or Theodotus (circa 160 C.E.), we read that "the male and female elements together constitute the finest production of the Mother, Wisdom." The Valentinians borrowed the mother-goddess myth from the Ophites (Gk. ophis snake) (Haskins R297 45) who saw the serpent of Eden as the divine complement of the world egg regenerating immortal life in wisdom and also implicitly as the penis. Orthodox opponents made tempestuous allegations of promiscuous gnostic sexual fertility rites. Iraneus comments: "Others, again, following upon Basilides and Carpocrates, have introduced promiscuous intercourse and a plurality of wives, and are indifferent about eating meats sacrificed to idols." Barbara Walker mentions the 'agape' being referred to as synesaktism suggesting Shakti worship. Epiphanius described the agape practiced by Ophite Christians, while making it clear that these heretical sexual activities filled him with horror (Walker R721 640) :

"Their women they share in common; and when anyone arrives who might be alien to their doctrine, the men and women have a sign by which they make themselves known to each other. When they extend their hands, apparently in greeting, they tickle the other's palm in a certain way and so discover whether the new arrival belongs to their cult. â€¦Husbands separate from their wives, and a man will say to his own spouse, 'Arise and celebrate the love feast (agape) with thy brother.' And the wretches mingle with each otherâ€¦after they have consorted together in a passionate debauchâ€¦The woman and the man take the man's ejaculation into their hands, stand upâ€¦offering to the Father, the Primal Being of All Nature, what is on their hands, with the words, 'We bring to Thee this oblation, which is the very Body of Christ.' â€¦They consume it, take housel of their shame and say: 'This is the Body of Christ, the Paschal Sacrifice through which our bodies suffer and are forced to confess to the sufferings of Christ.' And when the woman is in her period,

they do likewise with her menstruation. The unclean flow of blood, which they garner, they take up in the same way and eat together. And that, they say, is Christ's Blood. For when they read in Revelation, 'I saw the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month' (Rev. 22:2), they interpret this as an allusion to the monthly incidence of the female period."

Some of these statements may be exaggerated diatribes by opponents. The Borborite Ophites were also said to extract fetuses from pregnant women and consume them, particularly if the women accidentally became pregnant during related sexual rituals. However gnostic sexuality has a factual basis in libertine gnostic myth and practice (Gero R235), although others quoting the Nassene Ophites describe them as innocently worshipping the androgynous condition, regarding sexual concourse as symptomatic of the paradigm of death.

Valentinus attributes the paradox of the creation of the imperfect world to Wisdom: "Desiring to conceive by herself, apart from her masculine counterpart, ... she became the 'great creative power from whom all things originate', often called Eve, 'Mother of all living'. But since her desire violated the harmonious union of opposites intrinsic in the nature of created being, what she produced was ... defective; [causing] the terror and grief that mar human existence. To author her creation, Wisdom brought forth the demiurge, the creator-God of Israel, as her agent. ... Besides being the 'first universal creator', who brings forth all creatures, [wisdom] also enlightens human beings. Followers of Valentinus and Marcus therefore prayed to her as the 'mystical, eternal Silence' and to 'Grace, She who is before all things', and as 'incorruptible Wisdom' for insight (gnosis). Valentinus reasons that Silence is the appropriate complement of the Father, designating the former as feminine and the latter as masculine ... He goes on to describe how Silence receives, as in a womb, the seed of the Ineffable Source; from this she brings forth all the emanations of divine being, ranged in harmonious pairs of masculine and feminine energies. Followers of Valentinus prayed to her for protection as the Mother, and as 'the mystical, eternal Silence'." (Pagels R522 76).

The Great Announcement ... explains the origin of the universe in the manner of Shiva and Shakti: "From the power of Silence appeared 'a great power, the Mind (nous) of the Universe, which manages all things, and is a male ... the other ... a great Intelligence (epinoia) ... is a female which produces all things.' ... This is one power divided above and below; generating itself, making itself grow, seeking itself, finding itself, being mother of itself, father of itself, sister of itself, spouse of itself, daughter of itself, son of itself - mother, father, unity, being a source of the entire circle of existence" (Pagels R522 73).

"A work attributed to Simon Magus suggests a mystical meaning for Paradise, the place where human life began: Grant Paradise to be the womb; ... 'I am He that formed thee in thy mother's womb' (Isaiah 44:2) ... Moses ... using allegory had declared Paradise to be the womb ... and Eden, the placenta" (R522 75).

The divine mother is portrayed by gnostics as mystical silence, Holy Spirit, the image of thought (ennoia) and wisdom Sophia. Other gnostics attributed to Sophia the nourishment and self-awareness that Adam and Eve received in Paradise ... When the creator became angry with the human race because they did not worship or honor him as Father and God, he sent forth a flood upon them, that he might destroy them. But Wisdom opposed him ... "and Noah and his family were saved in the ark by means of the sprinkling of the light that proceeded from her, and through it the world was again filled with humankind" (R522 76). Yet others point out that for Adam to produce Eve he must have been androgynous, as is suggested by the first Genesis account.

God was now perceived as a lesser demiurge. "Some concluded that the God of Israel ...was merely instrumental power whom the Mother had created. ... They say that he believed that he had made everything by himself, but that, in reality, he had created the world because Wisdom, his Mother, 'infused him with energy' and implanted into him her own ideas. ... 'It was because he was foolish and ignorant of his Mother that he said, 'I am God; there is none beside me'.' According to another account, the creator caused his Mother to grieve by creating inferior beings, so she left him alone and withdrew into the upper regions of the heavens.

The Secret Book of John notes the paradox of a sole jealous god:

"he said: 'I am a jealous God, and there is no other God beside me.' But by announcing this he indicated to the angels ... that another God does exist; for if there were no other one, of whom would he be jealous? ... Then the mother began to be distressed" "Others declared that his Mother refused to tolerate such presumption: [The creator], becoming arrogant in spirit, boasted himself over all those things that were below him, and exclaimed, 'I am father, and God, and above me there is no one.' But his mother, hearing him speak thus, cried out against him, 'Do not lie, Ialdabaoth'" (R522 79).

"According to the Hypostasis of the Archons, ... both the mother and her daughter objected when he [said], 'It is I who am God, and there is no other apart from me.'. . . And a voice came forth from above the realm of absolute power, saying, 'You are wrong, Samael' [which means, 'god of the blind']. And he said, 'If any other thing exists before me, let it appear to me!' And immediately, Sophia ('Wisdom'' stretched forth her finger, and introduced light into matter, and she followed it down into the region of Chaos.... And he again said to his offspring, 'It is I who am the God of All.' And Life, the daughter of Wisdom, cried out; she said to him, 'You are wrong, Saklas!'" (R522).

In the Apocalypse of Adam, it is revealed to Seth that God struck Adam and Eve apart in wrath for Eve's vision (Robinson R589 277):

"When God created me out of the earth along with Eve your mother, I went about with her in a glory which she had seen in the aeon from which we had come forth. She taught me a word of knowledge of the eternal god. And we resembled the great eternal angels, for we were higher than the god who had created us and the powers with him whom we did not know. Then god, the ruler of the aeons and the powers divided us in wrath. Then we became two aeons. And the glory of our hearts left us, me and your mother Eve, along with the first knowledge that breathed within us ... and went into the great aeons. ... Then we recognized the god that had created us ... and we served him in fear and slavery".

The gnostic teacher Justinus describes the Lord's shock, terror, and anxiety when he discovered that he was not the God of the universe. Gradually his shock gave way to wonder, and finally he came to welcome what wisdom had taught him. The teacher [ironically] concludes: "This is the meaning of the saying 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'" (Pagels R522 79).

Trimorphic Protennoia (literally, the 'Triple-formed Primal Thought'), celebrates the feminine powers of Thought, Intelligence, and Foresight:

"I am Thought that [dwells in the Light]. [She who exists] before the All ... I move in every creature. ... I am the Invisible One within the All. I am perception and knowledge, uttering a Voice by means of Thought. I am the real voice. I cry out in everyone, and they know that a seed dwells within. ... Now I have come a second time in the likeness of a female ... I have revealed myself in the Thought of the likeness of my masculinity. ... I am androgynous. [I am both Mother and] Father, since I [copulate] with myself ... [and with those who love] me ... I am the Womb [that gives shape] to the All ... I am ... the glory of the Mother" (Pagels R522 77)

Thunder, Perfect Mind extends this revelation into a metaphysical koan abrogating all authority except gnosis itself, and a female gnosis of the valley. The awareness of the paradox of the nature of deity in this work is mysterious and profound (Pagels R522 67):

'Look upon me you who reflect upon me
and you hearers hear me
You who are waiting for me take me to yourselves.
For I am the first and the last.
I am the honored one and the scorned one.
I am the whore, and the holy one.
I am the wife and the virgin.
I am (the mother) and the daughter....
I am the barren one, and many are her sons
I am she whose wedding is great,
and I have not taken a husband....

I am knowledge, and ignorance....
I am shameless; I am ashamed.
I am strength, and I am fear....
I am senseless, and I am wise. ...
I am the silence that is incomprehensible
and the idea whose remembrance is frequent.
I am the one whom they call Life
and you have called death
I am the one you have pursued
I am the one you have seized
I am the one you have scattered
and you have gathered me together.
I am the one before whom you have been ashamed
and you have been shameless to me.
I am godless, and I am one whose God is great.
I am the union and the dissolution.
I am the judgement and the acquittal.
I am the sinless and the root of sin derives from me
I am lust in (outward) appearance
and interior self-control exists within me
For many are the forms ... and fleeting pleasures
which men embrace until they become sober
and go up to their resting place.
And they will find me there
and they will live
and they will not die again.'

Pauline Paganism and Martyr's Blood

Christianity has since made sex a lubricious mortal sin, while contriving that Gothic pinnacles of stone are the marriage bed of a fallen hero, whose blood continues to drip from his wounded body, in its all-too-protracted death throes, from every crucifix and statue into the cup of every communion service, partaken with God the world over as the soma and sangre - a flesh and blood celebration of human sacrifice ordained by God for forgiveness' sake.

Fra Angelico "The Annunciation of Mary"

Mary played little part in Yeshua's mission. When told "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee" he demurred "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." However Mary was later crafted by the orthodoxy to provide a more politically correct form of the chaste feminine than Magdalen, in the shadow of Eve's 'error' in Eden (left), now a Hellenistic virgin mother, rather than a priestess out of wedlock.

From the time of born-again Paul, the Christian path became a pagan one, permeated by symbols replacing reality; from the Rapture, through divine birth, the Virgin Mary; to the Trinity; which were never a part of the original teachings of Yeshua, and whose immense popularity in the pagan gentile world attests to their intrinsic Dionysian and Hellenistic paganism.

The Christian God in Yeshua's apocalyptic terminology is Abba - father - again male paternity, but in an ostensibly more compassionate, forgiving form, though steeped in the agrarian confusion of seasonal sacrifice of the male hero, attributed to a supposedly infanticidal 'Father', to prove to us all that we must be utterly faithful to Him. Naturally God's innate jealousy remains central:

"Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (1 Corinth 10:22)

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy" (2 Corinth 11:2)

Pauline Christianity inserts a pagan view into the creation account which leads to a profoundly distorted view of sexuality. Jesus has moved from the messiah of the lost sheep of Israel to a demi-god, risen to the heavens in a bodily resurrection. He is a cosmic only begotten son of God, the second Adam born to a virginal Mariam, undoing Eve's carnal sin in chastity while Eve and the first Adam now endow us all with death. Womankind is the source of sin amid a violently masochistic contempt for the continuity of life in the form of martyrdom in the image of Yeshua's death.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. ... And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor 15:21

To commentators in the five centuries before Christ, Adam's death was due to his own sins, and not to any sin innate in the race of man (Haskins R297 72). Paul's act was to link Adam, the first father, and the rest of mankind in a hereditary manner. Adam's descendants became in Eph 2:2 the 'children of disobedience', 'by nature the children of wrath' (Fox R221 25).

In Gal 5:17 we see an almost Manichaean war of the flesh and spirit: 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would' He notes the works of the flesh in a way which became of hideous significance during the inquisition "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife seditions, heresies" (Haskins R297 72).

Paul took a very celibate view of sexuality, proclaiming beatitudes of celibacy and virginity.

"Blessed are they who have wives as if they had none, for they shall inherit God" (1 Cor 7:29)

"Blessed are they who have kept the flesh pure, for they shall become a temple of God." (2 Cor 6:16)

However he neither advocates nor prohibits virginal chastity "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor 7:25). In Ephesians 5:28 he even advocates empathic love: "So ought men to love their wives even as their own bodies, for he that loveth his wife loveth himself." Some passages suggest Paul might have castrated himself as Origen did. Numerous Christians adopted the same course; surgeons were besieged with requests to perform the operation (Briffault R76 v3 372), following Yeshua's enigmatic statement, although others derided it.

"I would they were even cut off which trouble you." (Galatians 5:12)

Paul advocates sexual union, but only as an antidote to fornication:

"It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. ... Defraud [deprive] ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by

permission, and not of commandment. ... For I would that all men were even as I myself. ... But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor 7:1).

Although the orthodox supported family life as a means of continuation of the faithful, many Christians from the first and second centuries, following Yeshua's condemnations of family commitment, believed that conversion transferred the individual to an eschatological identity set in opposition to family structures that reproduced a fallen history. For them becoming Christian meant renouncing sexual relations and family ties. Thecla for example, is said to have abandoned her fiancÃ© and family and followed Paul, twice miraculously escaping being eaten by lions (Ruther R599 34).

As we learn from Acts and Paul's own epistles, women were able to have important functions as bishops and deacons in the fledgling church, earning the admiration of Paul himself (Haskins R297 53, Pagels R523 18).

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles" (Rom 16:1).

However we find in 1 Cor 14:34 women barred from public ministry:

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

Pagels (R523 24) notes "The deutero-Pauline letters constitute in part a reaction to celibacy, stressing instead family life. However these authors also stress the lowly nature of woman as the perpetrator of original sin":

"I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men;
she is to keep silent with all subjection; for Adam was first formed then Eve.
Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (1 Tim 2:11)

In a Manichaean vein both Ambrose and Tertullian declared that the extinction of the human race was preferable to its propagation by sexual intercourse (Briffault R76 v3 374).

"The sentiments of the early Christians were almost hysterically connected with martyrdom in their desire to confess their faith and become sacrificial victims in the shadow of Christ, perpetuating the agony of the crucifixion in further cycles of violence. For some apocalyptist movements martyrdom was a direct route to the imminent kingdom. Montanists, for whom women had prominent roles, were confessors who gave condemned women special powers of intercession. Even when the authorities tried to persuade the accused to come to their senses for their own accord, sometimes ordering a stay of execution for a month, the accused often preferred a gruesome death to having to atone later to Jesus for denying him, even as Peter himself had done. "You wish no time for reconsideration?" "In so just a matter, there is no need for reconsideration." Justin Martyr comments "no one can terrify or subdue us who believe in Jesus Christ ... though beheaded and crucified, and thrown to the wild beasts, in chains, in fire, in all kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others, in larger numbers, become believers." Tertullian claimed that, despite initially enjoying these ludicrous cruelties of the noonday exhibition, the sight of Christians dressed to look like Attis being torn apart in the arena, or burned alive as Hercules ultimately inspired his own conversion: "You must take up your cross and bear it after your master,... the sole key to unlock paradise is your life's blood" (Pagels R522 94-113).

The hatred of heresy (whose meaning 'choice'indicates orthodoxy is choice denied) came hand in hand with the love of martyrdom. Some did recognize that perhaps this was against the will of God, since Jesus had died so they might not have to, particularly gnostic 'heretics' who were not so

uniformly literal minded, but were instead diverse. Some supported it some opposed it on the grounds that it was no instant fix to replace realization.

The story of Perpetua (Pagels R523 33-6) is a shrine to the way in which the Kingdom of the Father has led to precipitate and tortured death on the part of Christian believers. Perpetua, twenty-two years old, recently married, and nursing her infant son, was arrested along with her friends. They were scourged and thrown into a stifling and crowded African jail. After her arrest, Perpetua's father, ... out of love for me," she wrote, "was trying to persuade me to change my decision." Refusing his pleas to give up the name Christian, Perpetua rejected her familial name instead, although she says she grieved to see her father, mother, and brothers "suffering out of compassion for me." At first, she wrote, "I was tortured with worry for my baby there," but after she gained permission for him to stay with her in prison, "at once I recovered my health, relieved as I was of my worry and anxiety for the child." Perpetua's slave Felicitas was pregnant when she was arrested and was in her eighth month as the execution date approached: "Felicitas was very distressed that her martyrdom would be postponed because of her pregnancy; for it is against the law for pregnant women to be executed." She feared she would have to endure a later execution along with criminals. Two days before the execution the Christians prayed for her in one torrent of common grief, and immediately after their prayer the labor pains came upon her. When Perpetua's brother asks her for a vision as to whether they will be condemned or freed, she dreams of scaling a ladder covered in harsh sharp weapons reaching to the heavens guarded by a dragon emerging to a heavenly garden, meeting the grey haired one and the blessed and realized she faced martyrdom. "From then on we gave up having any hope in this world". Hilarianus the governor said to me: "Have pity on your father's grey head; have pity on your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors." "I will not," I retorted. "Are you a Christian?" said Hilarianus. And I said: "Yes, I am. When my father persisted in trying to dissuade me, Hilarianus ordered him to be thrown to the ground and beaten with a rod. I felt sorry for my father, just as if I myself had been beaten. I felt sorry for his pathetic old age. Then Hilarianus passed sentence on all of us: we were condemned to the beasts, and we returned to prison in high spirits. 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". It is said in the Golden Legend that she was mauled by a lion and Felicitas by a leopard. (Young R774 47).

It is an irony of history that out of the orthodox churches collective solidarity in the face of the holocaust of martyrdom came also the eclipse of the gnostic 'inner path'. By 200 AD Irenaeus ushered in the campaign of the orthodox church against the gnostics, complaining in particular that women were celebrating the Eucharist with the gnostic teacher Marcus. Tertullian, before going to the other side and becoming a gnostic himself, expresses similar outrage: "These heretical women - how audacious they are! They have no modesty; they are bold enough to teach, to engage in argument, to enact exorcisms, to undertake cures, and it may be, even to baptize!" (Pagels R523 80-81).

Tertullian described women as 'the devil's gateway' and coined the word concupiscence from the Latin, concupiscere, to long for, to be desirous of, to covet (p 554), which signified Adam and Eve's fatal flaw and the loss of integrity which had resulted from their disobedience to God. Tertullian makes clear the scorn and prejudice of early Church fathers:

"And do you not know that you are [each] an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of that [forbidden] tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert - that is, death - even the Son of God had to die" (Haskins R297 79).

Many of the early fathers, from Tatian to Jerome and Ambrose, believed that the animal act and the loss of virginity were the cause of the fall (Pagels R523 27, Haskins R297 79, Briffault R76 v3 373).

This attitude to virginity implied that marriage was an inferior state of being to the higher glory of chastity, which prepared one for the heavenly state. Clement rejected such associations and declared that sexual intercourse was not sinful but was part of God's original and 'good' creation - cooperation in God's act of creation as in fact many Jews had thought before him. Clement however claimed: "Every woman ought to be filled with shame at the thought she is a woman", and saw procreation as the sole legitimate purpose in sexuality - a reverberating doctrine of the Christian church (Pagels R523 28-9):

"Our ideal is not to experience desire at all ... A man who marries for the sake of begetting children must practice continence so that it is not desire he feels for his wife ... not even at night or in the darkness is it fitting to carry on immodestly or indecently ... for even that union which is legitimate is still dangerous, except in so far as it is engaged in procreation of children" never to take place in the morning, daytime or after dinner, and never with menstruating, barren, or menopausal wives".

The mix of the rapture of martyrdom in the shadow of Yeshua's own increasingly mythical act, the gnostic revilement of the flesh, and the strict orthodox view of sex as reproduction produced a paradoxical attitude to the sanctity of life. Christians took up the Jewish attitude to sex as reproduction and abhorred the attitudes to abortion and exposure of infants, (which was a father's right) of pagan Mesopotamia and Rome, and were seen by such cultures as practical means of avoiding unwanted or intellectually, or physically handicapped progeny. Philo the Jew, around the time of Jesus, had linked abortion and infanticide: "The same prohibition [on abortion] applies to another greater form of wrongdoing, namely the exposure of infants, an outrage which has become a common practice among many other peoples." Justin Martyr in the second century wrote that exposing infants was wicked because it led to debauchery (on the basis that children were found alive and taken by strangers) as well as murder. At the same time Barnabas ordained "Thou shalt kill neither the fetus by means of abortion, nor the newborn child". In 318 Constantine outlawed fathers killing their children under the rights of paterfamilias, but it wasn't until 374 that the killing of newborn children was identified as murder (Ranke-Heinemann R564 54).

John Chrysostom inveighs against all forms of non-reproductive sex and any control of fertility, including contraception and abortion:

"Why do you scatter your seed where the field is at pains to destroy the harvest, where pregnancies are avoided by all or any means, where murder is committed prior to birth? Even a harlot you do not suffer to remain a harlot; you make her a murderess as well. ... There is indeed something worse than murder, and I know not what to call it, for such women do not kill what has taken shape, they prevent it from taking shape at all"

However in the place of abortion, infanticide and exposure, early Christians appear to have substituted frank abandonment. John Boswell (R72), noting a peculiar piece of advice given by early theologians: That 'men should be careful never to visit brothels, or have recourse to prostitutes, because in doing so they might unwittingly commit incest', realized the implication - not occasional, but wholesale abandonment of their offspring by the Christian forefathers. "The deeper Boswell delved, the clearer it became that very nearly the majority of women living in Rome during the first three centuries of the Christian era, who had reared more than one child, had abandoned at least one. He found himself looking at rates of abandonment around 20 to 40 percent of children born. If Romans gave to crippled beggars it was because 'everyone is afraid he might say no to his own child'." Judging by later statistics, a vast majority of those abandoned would have died. (Hrdy R330 297).

The 'Demon Rod' that wouldn't Lie Down

In Uta Ranke-Heinemann's words (R564 62):

"St Augustine, the greatest of all the Fathers of the Church, was the man responsible for welding Christianity and hostility to sexual pleasure into a systematic whole. His influence on the development of the Christian sexual ethic is undisputed, and the papal condemnations of the contraceptive Pill were heavily coloured by it. To speak of sexual hostility, therefore, is to speak of Augustine. He was the theological thinker who blazed a trail for the ensuing centuries indeed, for

the ensuing millennium-and-a-half. ... Theologically, he established a relationship between original sin, which played so great a part in his redemptive system, and enjoyment of the sexual act. To him, original sin betokened eternal death and damnation for all who had not been saved, that is to say, delivered by God's grace from 'the multitude of the damned' to which all human beings belonged. Salvation was, however, denied to many even ... to unbaptized children".

In 'Confessions' Augustine wrote that he had several love affairs as a young man. After turning twenty, however, he chose one woman with whom he lived, apparently monogamously, for the next thirteen years. Augustine chose [her] because he loved her; and he slept with her because he loved to'. While still living with his mistress, however, Augustine joined the Manichaeans, a sect that saw the world divided into two realms, God's and Satan's ,which saw light and dark, locked in permanent conflict and the soul, a spark of light, seeking to escape the darkness of the physical world, and taught that all sexual activity aided the powers of evil. Augustine was an auditor in the group, a rank below the Elect, who abstained from sex totally and ate as little as possible. Augustine, not yet the man he would become, responded with a now famous prayer of his own: "Lord, give me chastity, but not now." Then, walking in the garden, he heard a childs voice chanting "Take it, read it" and his eye caught the following passage:

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" Rom 13:13).

Augustine's conversion in the year 387, when he was 29, while reading a passage of Pauline Platonism, was hard luck on the married. He repudiated his common-law partner 'she had sensed my unthinking ardour, albeit she was my only mistress', and on whom he had fathered a son. His mistress, unnamed although he felt a 'sharp and searing pain' on their separation swore to remain eternally faithful to him when he sent her away. "Since the one whose bed I used to share was wrested from my side, being as it were an impediment to my marriage, my heart, because it clung to her was deeply wounded and bled". Nevertheless, he called his relations with her "a loose bond of impure love in which children are most unwelcome, even if they subsequently constrain us to love them" His mother was making preparations for a suitable marriage, but the wealthy prospective bride of her choice was only 12 and had yet to attain marriageable age. Rather than wait another two years, Augustine took another mistress" (Haskins R297 71, Friedman R227 37, Ranke Heinemann R564 61).

His strict observance of contraceptive methods and attention to his partner's infertile days, foiled by the miscalculation that resulted in the birth of his son, was succeeded after his conversion by a fanatical campaign against contraception of all kinds, although, following Leviticus and Aristotelian biology, Augustine and Jerome considered the fetus was not 'human' for up to 80 days: "The seed takes gradual shape in the uterus, and it does not count as killing until the various elements have acquired their outward appearance and their members." He nevertheless pronounced a comprehensive ban on all forms of birth control: "It is impermissible and vile to have intercourse with one's wife and avoid the conception of pregnancy" Contraceptive herbal and other medications and cervical barriers, which had been known from the time of the Egyptians in 2000 BC were particularly singled out: "Sometimes this cruel lust is such that they even procure poisons of infertility so that the wife actually becomes the husband's whore or he an adulterer with his own wife."

Augustine's epiphany was tautological: he was powerless to control the penis because free choice is an illusion. Adam's birthright at Creation was freedom, defined by Augustine as the ability to obey God, yet Adam scorned that gift because he wanted the "freedom to do wickedness." Adam's sin deprived his descendants of the freedom to choose not to sin. The ultimate embodiment of this, Augustine wrote, is "disobedience in the member." After Adam and Eve flouted God's will by eating the forbidden fruit, they experienced two new sensations: shame at their nakedness and sexual stirrings they could not control. "We are ashamed of that very thing which made those beings ashamed, when they covered their loins." That "very thing" is a spontaneous erection. Before sinning, Adam and Eve had mastery over sex, procreating as an act of volition, "the way one commands his feet when he walks." But since leaving Eden men have become powerless over, and

tortured by, erections. "At times the urge intrudes uninvited," Augustine wrote in City of God. "At other times, it deserts the panting lover, and, although desire blazes in the mind, the body is frigid." With this one stroke, this one man transformed the penis more than any man who had yet lived: the sacred staff became the demon rod. "Everyone is necessarily evil and carnal through Adam," Augustine wrote. The agent transferring this stigma from one generation to the next is semen. This "astonishing argument," declared that "every human is born contaminated." (Pagels R523, Friedman R227 37). To Augustine, the sin of Adam and Eve had not been sexual intercourse but their presumption, in their desire for knowledge, to rival their Creator. Concupiscence affected the whole being, as man in his fallen state no longer had control over himself, and was prey to agitations of the flesh. Adam and Eve's sin lay not in the sexual act, but the lust accompanying a procreative process, which would otherwise have occurred with angelic apathy.

Ambrose, a champion of orthodoxy, and an ardent advocate of the Virgin Mary, taught that Adam and Eve had fallen from a state of 'original perfection' and adopting this thesis, Augustine wrote in glowing terms of the life that Adam had originally had in Paradise, exempt from all physical evils or sickness, endowed with immortal youth, and with the possibility of immortality, through eating of the tree of life. Adam's intellect and moral character had been equally elevated. He had, however, misused the free will given him by his Creator, and succumbed to temptation. As a punishment, he had acquired a moral debility, concupiscence, which was transmuted through physical heredity to his descendents, who were thus rendered a massa damnata. To Augustine, death had come upon all human beings by their union with Adam, and they also shared in the responsibility for the Fall; he thereby denied that humanity had a free moral choice. "For we were all in that one man ... who fell into sin through the woman who was made from him" (Haskins R297 76, Jones R349 22).

In 'City of God' (413-26) Augustine notes that it would be "a manifest absurdity to deny that the sexual differences were created for begetting children. But marriage would have taken place in Paradise without the accompanying - 'lust'." Augustine tells us that before the Fall, Adam had been capable of moving his sexual member with as much control as fallen man might exercise over a finger. But now, infected by the stain of original sin, the sexual organs functioned with no regard to their owner, in retribution for their sin of disobedience. "Without the allurement of passion goading him on, the husband would have relaxed on his wife's bosom in tranquillity of mind and with no impairment of his body's integrity". After their sin our first parents covered their parts of in shame of their pudenda (Latin, pudendus shameful). Eve's formation from Adam's rib rendered her the weaker part of the couple, and she compounded her subordinate role as helper by tempting Adam to fall. Adam's culpability lay merely in his desire please his spouse (Haskins R297 77).

Pelagius also held that the Fall had come about through God's gift of free will, but denied that the sin of Adam and Eve had been passed on to their descendants - it had been theirs alone - and thus rejected St Paul's pronouncement in his letter to the Romans. Augustine disputed with Pelagius and claimed that humanity had no free will, but was doomed to transgress because original sin - estrangement from God - was congenital and universal. To allow man freedom to decide minimized the role of God and the power of the Church. Pelagius was twice accused of heresy, partly through Augustine's bribing of the emperor and died soon after (Pagels R523 129-30). One of his followers, Julian of Eclanum challenged Augustine back. Augustine summoning all his eloquence and fury argued for a view of nature utterly antithetical to scientific naturalism. Augustine's error Julian believed, was to regard the present state of nature as punishment, for Augustine went further than those Jews and Christians who agreed that Adam's sin brought death upon the human race. He insisted that Adam's sin also brought upon us universal moral corruption. Julian responded that 'natural sin' does not exist. No physically transmitted, hereditary condition infects human nature, much less nature in general. (Pagels R523 132-3). In reply, Augustine releases the Pandora's box of genetic abnormality: "If nothing deserving punishment passes from parents to infants, who could bear to see the image of God sometimes born retarded, since this afflicts the soul itself. You must explain why such innocence is sometimes born blind or deaf." citing even children's suffering and of course mortality as original sin. Augustine took things to other impossible lengths, claiming that before the Fall there were no weeds, an age of innocence which defies all biological realities. Pagels comments that Augustine denies nature, the existence of nature per se ... for he cannot think of the natural world except as a reflection of human desire and will.

Julian rejected the notion of natural sin and accused Augustine of retaining his Manichaean heresy, insisting the church was founded on the praise of creation, marriage, law, saints and will. In counter to Augustine's reading of pain in childbirth he pointed out naturally that [pagan] village women with good childbirth practice had easy deliveries. Julian sees childbirth pains, death, being ruled by a husband and living by the sweat of labor as conditions of nature, not punishment, noting that sweat is a beneficial, not sinful, response to exertion and that Adam anyway had to "dress and keep" the garden before the Fall. Julian's greatest feat however was to correctly realize that the fall is the existential situation that arises when we fall into the sin of separation from the whole and make the world harsh through our selfishness (Pagels R523 136-8). Augustine saw Julian's "vital fire" of the natural 'appetite' of sexual desire as that "which does not obey the soul's decision, but for the most part, rises up against the soul's desire in disorderly and ugly movements". The ultimate punishment - to be tormented by 'natural' sexual arousal. And by Julian, who continued to reject his arguments until Augustine's death.

Augustine's theory of original sin not only proved politically expedient, since it persuaded many of his contemporaries that human beings universally need external government ... but also offered an analysis of human nature that became, for better or worse, the heritage of all subsequent generations of western Christians (Pagels R523 xxvi). Such was Augustine's later reputation that his views were to permanently color the Christian view of sin, sexuality and the female. Augustine's doctrine was austere. As children were born full of sin they were damned if they died before baptism. Hell, he said, was paved with infants. He could not understand why God had chosen the sexual option, and the opportunity it gave for sin, for the Garden of Eden. After debating whether there was sexual intercourse before the Fall or merely metaphorical fruitfulness or asexual reproduction he resigned himself to the idea that a woman was chosen because of her 'generative purpose': "If it was good company and conversation that Adam needed, it would have been much better arranged to have two men together as friends, not a man and a woman" (Jones R348 222). Ranke-Heinemann notes: (R564 73) "women to their great dismay had been pronounced fit only for childbearing and unqualified for anything of a spiritual or intellectual nature".

The contortions to which Christian and particularly Catholic thinking went to suppress sexual pleasure are accounted in full by Uta Ranke-Heinemann (R564) in 'Eunuchs for Heaven'. Augustine's concern with sin was extended to a form of sexual slavery in which women were expected to be sexual 'nurses' offering themselves to their husbands, even at risk of death, or when still in child bed, if there was any chance of male extra-marital fornication (R564 133). Later the view in which marriage was a remedy for sexual desire evolved into high scholasticism in which the grace conferred by marriage consisted of its suppression of sexual desire (136).

In a bizarre twist, the 'restrained embrace' of Cardinal Huguccio (d1210) consisted of satisfying the 'incontinent' demands of a wife for sex by withholding male orgasm (R564 150) in a pleasureless form of Tantrism (p 462).

I can so render my wife her due and wait in such manner as she assuages her desire. Indeed often on such occasions a woman is want to anticipate her husband, and when the wife's desire for the carnal work is assuaged, I can if I wish withdraw, free from all sin, without assuaging my own desire, or emitting my seed of propagation.

In turn, inducing orgasm in the wife in this way also became a mortal sin. Female orgasm by now was associated with a 'semen' of its own, following Galen's attribution of it to procreation in contrast to Aristotle. In what Ranke-Heinemann (R564 156) describes as theology's golden age and woman's darkest hour, Albertus Magnus declared that woman was 'less suited to morality':

For woman contains more fluid than man, and is characteristic of fluid to absorb readily and retain poorly. Fluid is easily moved, so women are inconstant and inquisitive. When a woman has intercourse with one man, she would feign lie underneath another at the same time. Woman is a stranger to fidelity. ... Woman is an imperfect man and possesses compared to him, a defective and deficient nature She is therefore insecure in herself. That which she herself cannot receive, she endeavours to obtain by means of mendacity and devilish tricks. In short therefore, one must beware of every woman as one would a poisonous serpent and the horned devil.

Protestantism was by no means immune from this mentality. The fall, for Luther as well as Augustine had brought the debasement of sex into lust and a more coercive subjugation of woman to punish her for her priority in sin. In Luther's words (Ruether R599 74):

The rule remains with the husband and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state, wages war, defends his possessions, tills the soil, plants etc. The wife on the other hand is like a nail driven into a wall. She sits at home.

In this, Luther, who espoused marriage rather than celibacy, looks to a natural procreation based on a well-defined and brief estrus in the absence of sexual desire, hinting also that before the Fall, women held social power and esteem (Young R774 85):

if the woman had not been deceived by the serpent and had not sinned, she would have been the equal of Adam in all respects. For the punishment, that she is now subjected to the man, was imposed on her after sin and because of sin, just as the other hardships and dangers were: travail, pain, and countless other vexations. Therefore Eve was not like the woman of today; her state was far better and more excellent... In addition - and this is lamentable - woman is also necessary as an antidote against sin. And so, in the case of the woman, we must think not only of the managing of the household which she does, but also of the medicine which she is. In this respect Paul says (1 Cor. 7:2): "Because of fornication let each one have his own wife." ... Therefore we are compelled to make use of this sex in order to avoid sin. It is almost shameful to say this, but nevertheless it is true. For there are very few who marry solely as a matter of duty. But the rest of the animals do not have this need. Consequently, for the most part they copulate only once a year and then are satisfied with this as if by duty. But the conduct of human beings is different. They are compelled to make use of intercourse with their wives in order to avoid sin. ... If Adam has persisted in the state of innocence, this intimate relationship would have been most delightful. The very work of procreation would have been most sacred and would have been held in esteem. ... Therefore was this fall not a terrible thing?

The end result is to accept reproduction, but to deny any form of sexual pleasure. To invoke the rule of man but deny the redemptive power of woman. It is also to imbue all the natural world, which was originally paradisiacal, with the culpability of human original sin, explaining 'natural evil' as ultimately a consequence of human concupiscence. Yet only humans are capable of potential immortality through the redemption of Christ. In Rosemary Radford Ruether's (R598 30) words in 'Gaia and God': "On the one hand, humans are said to be guilty for the inadequacies of the rest of nature ... On the other hand humans bear no ultimate responsibility for the rest of creation. Animal and plant life can be exploited at will by humans as our possessions. They have no personhood in their own that need to be respected, and we share no common fate with them. These ambiguities in the Christian world picture ... have contributed to ecological irresponsibility."

Freedom of Spirit and the Christian Dark Ages

While Augustine did acknowledge that marriage provided three virtues, progeny, channeling the lust of the flock through fidelity and the sacrament of marriage which was a reflection of that between Christ and 'his' church, it was still a secondary condition not quite fully Christian in the sense of the new 'virginal' age ushered in by Christ and Mary. There was at the same time a major move towards clerical celibacy. Although early Christian celibacy was a shared attitude among all, 1 Timothy had spoken of the priesthood in terms of paterfamilias and priests were generally fathers. But from the Council of Elivira in 309, all bishops, presbyters and deacons were called to give up sex with their wives as a condition of ordination (Ruther R599 47). In the eastern church both patterns coexisted. This council also excommunicated women for remarriage but only advised against it for men and banned women from writing or receiving letters in their own name (Ranke-Heinemann R564 26, 112).

However these reforms were not to be of lasting effect. In the fourth century, Germanic and Celtic expansion resulted in a significant change of marriage patterns. They practised a 'resource polygyny' that allowed powerful chiefs to accumulate a plurality of wives and concubines. A marriage involved a dowry and possibly estates. In addition the chief could have 'free love' concubines (Ruether R599 52). Divorce was by mutual consent with the wife expected to take her

wedding gifts with her. This enabled some women to gain political power through their combined familial associations, but many women were thus monopolized by the elite men. Although the clergy railed at these practices, many also adopted them. The church attempted to unravel these associations asserting monogamy along with exogamy to the seventh degree. Since marriages were secular and often informal it was hard for the church to define the actual marital status even of nobility, but they concentrated their attention on the principal wife, who was often in a political marriage for dynastic ends. A host of tolerated concubinages continued unrecognized. A sharp distinction between legitimate and illegitimate liaisons and their offspring was now drawn.

In the eleventh century the papal reform movement sought to take control of all church offices and property to prevent nobility from appointing religious positions and the control of their estates as extensions of family holdings. The clergy accused the nobility of simony and married priests as fornicators and heretics while their opponents accused them of being sodomites who preferred other men to marriage. The reformists had significant victories and the nobility, in response sought more consolidated control over their own lands and family systems, through male primogeniture and patrilineage. Ordination was again made a bar to marriage and illegitimacy a bar to ordination. The male population was thus split in Europe between a celibate priesthood and a married laity. The fallout, as we have seen today is a priesthood riddled with pederasty, paedophilia, and other forms of sexual abuse.

In the same century the Crusades began, following the capture of Jerusalem, blocking the road to pilgrimage and the defeat of the Byzantine army. Hopes of the Papacy for reunification of East and West, the nobility's hunger for land at a time of crop failures, population pressure in the West, and an alternative to warfare at home were major impulses, lured by the fabulous riches of the East and as a means of extending trade routes. The First Crusade was launched by Pope Urban II in 1095. With the cry Deus vult! ("God wills it"), thousands took the cross. Bands of poorly armed pilgrims, inexperienced and poor, set out for Constantinople under Peter The Hermit and Walter the Penniless even before the army gathered. Some began by massacring Jews in the Rhine valley. Many perished on their way east, and the rest were destroyed by the Muslims when they crossed into Anatolia. Ten thousand French of utter cruelty had plundered the territory. They dismembered babies, others they put on spits and roasted over a fire, those of advanced years, they subjected to every form of torture. The Turkish sultan ambushed them by pandering to their greed for the spoils of war. Such a large number of Franks became the victim of the Turkish swords that, when the remains of the slaughtered men were collected, "they made a huge mountain, deep and wide, most remarkable, so great were the pile of bones" (Hallam R281 67-8).

Treachery for greed again unwound the second Crusade when Damascus failed to be taken because some men received a vast sum of money to misdirect the attack. Sexual misadventure among the high court ladies also weakened and confused the campaign, with Elanor of Aquitane cuckolding the king for her uncle and reputedly Saladin as well. Women were later denied the right to object to their husbands leaving on Crusade to force support, but begrudgingly it was acknowledged that women needed to accompany the men to populate new lands. Women were involved in hand to hand combat with long knives.

The third Crusade began after Saladin took most of Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia. The effort disintegrated through attrition and lack of cooperation, although Acre was recaptured, Jaffa was secured, and Cyprus occupied. Richard the Lion-heart, beloved of Robin Hood, presided over the beheading of 2700 Islamic men, women and children of Acre, illustrating the Christian will to religious genocide and a breach of faith. By contrast, Saladin was a man of honour. When a French woman came to him during a siege saying "Yesterday some Muslim thieves entered my tent and stole my little girl. My commanders told me the King of the Muslims is merciful". Saladin was touched. He sent someone to the slave market to search and within an hour a horseman arrived bearing the child on his shoulders (Hallam R281 157).

In the eleventh century, the violence and treachery of the Crusades began to turn on its own people. Contact with the holy land had led to a revival of gnostic ideas. The idea took firm hold around Albi, in southern France. Soon, its adherents the Albigenses and Cathars - the katharol, with an elite of perfecti or pure ones - controlled much of the Languedoc. They believed in two

eternal principles of good and evil, did not acknowledge the sacraments, the doctrines of hell or purgatory, or the resurrection of the body and developed their own ceremony and ritual, rejecting the authority of the Church. They had lives of simplicity and penance in which salvation lay only in the Lord. The Pope became alarmed at the threat to his power and proclaimed a crusade against them. Thousands of Cathars were killed and many more tortured into accepting the true faith. Laws were passed to suppress the Albigensian heresy, and the first Inquisition established to ensure that they were applied.

Early in the war, 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". (Haskins R297 135, Jones R348 223, 241). 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 (Hallam R281 232).

"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" (Hallam R281 234).

The papal Inquisition was formally instituted by Pope Gregory IX in 1231 as an extension of the Albigensian Crusade. This has become the most diabolical manifestation of a religion projecting the jealousy of God. A jealousy in the form of religious paranoia in which any form of deviation is seen as a diabolical act of the Devil, with whom God is at war, so that any act of violence becomes permissible, regardless of any standards of humanity, or justice.

The Pope as the anti-Christ (Cohn R125)

Along with public disgust at the church's avarice, there was a growing suspicion, sparked by gnostic philosophies, that rejected the church's myths of the garden of Eden, the fall, original sin, heaven and hell, the virgin birth, the meaning of salvation, the flesh and blood Eucharist. The church responded with calculated violence. Following a law of Holy Roman Emperor Fredrick II, Gregory ordered convicted heretics to be seized by the secular authorities and burned. The power of the Inquisition was established and enlarged by a series of papal bulls. That of Pope Innocent IV, in 1252, authorized seizure of their goods, imprisonment, torture, and, on conviction, death, all on minimal and highly selective evidence. It was in historian Henry Charles Lea's words: "a standing mockery of justice - perhaps the most iniquitous that the arbitrary cruelty of man has ever devised.... Fanatic zeal, arbitrary cruelty, and insatiable cupidity rivalled each other in building up a system unspeakably atrocious.

Notoriously harsh in its procedures, the Inquisition was defended during the Middle Ages by appeal to biblical practices and to Augustine, who had interpreted Luke 14:23 "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." as endorsing the use of force against heretics. However the version in Thomas 64 says:

"The master said to his servant, 'Go outside to the streets and bring back those whom you happen to meet, so that they may dine'"

It was a system which might well seem the invention of demons." St. Bernard deplored the church's greed: "Whom can you show me among the prelates who does not seek rather to empty the pockets of his flock than to subdue their vices?" Bulgarian writers said the priests of Rome were given to drunkenness and robbery, and "there is none to forbid them." Priests were a privileged class, but their privileges were more and more resented. In the 12th century, monasteries made themselves into wine shops and gambling houses; nunneries became private whore-houses for the clergy; priests used a confessional to seduce female parishioners (Walker R721). The Spanish Inquisition was particularly severe and selected out ex-Jews and ex-Moslems who had previously been forced to convert to Christianity. Mass burnings on the Iberian peninsula were known as 'acts of faith'. They were held once a month on the average, usually on a Sunday or holiday so all could attend; to stay away was thought suspicious. Sometimes the spectators were invited to participate, as in the diversion genially known as "shaving the new Christians." This meant setting fire to the hair or beards of those waiting their turn at the stake. The power of the inquisitors extended to the Americas where the Aztecs marvelled at the similarity of the communion to their own human sacrificial rite and identfied Cortez and the conquistadors with Quetzalcoatl who was prophesied to return. Extreme Catholics committed violent atrocities in the face of pagan practices killing and dismembering the native population, merely for playing heathen native music (Gruzinski R272).

After arrest, the property of the accused was instantly confiscated. Nothing seems to have been returned. The popes publicly praised the rule of confiscation as a prime weapon against heresy. Affluent Italy made its inquisitors incredibly rich in the 14th century. "When I have you tortured, and by the severe means afforded by the law I bring you to confession, then I perform a work pleasing in God's sight; and it profiteth me." Torture was officially sanctioned in 1257 and remained a legal recourse of the church for five and a half centuries until it was abolished by Pope Pius VII in 1816.

A major target of the Inquisition was the Free Spirit movement (Lerner R408, Cohn R125, Zweig R785), which both represented a pure historical form of liberal gnosticism and a central threat to Christian sexual repression. It is believed to have originated from Sufis who entered Spain a century or two before, who had themselves had contact with liberal gnostic elements in the East, who held a tradition of complete assumption of Christ nature. The word 'beggar' comes from the male begherds and female beguines of the 'Heresy of the Free Spirit' whose followers embraced sexual freedom and enlightened amorality, allowing all actions to be permissible to the initiates who had experienced the godhead in inner ecstasy. During the twelfth to fourteenth centuries the movement became very popular in certain sections of society and was part of the widespread pilgrimage circuit. The begherds were wandering males who spiritually supported and sexually exploited, lonely women and widows. The beguines came from often wealthy families in a social situation where there was an excess of unpartnered women as a result of both war and the large number of men committed to celibate duties in the church.

On the last day of May, 1310, Marguerite Porete was burned at the Place de Grieve in what the first formal auto de fe (burning to death of heretics) of which we have cognizance at Paris. Her book had been condemned and burned in her presence by the Bishop of Cambrai, who warned her not to disseminate her ideas or writings any further under pain of being relaxed to the secular arm. The admonition, however, was to no avail. Between 1306 and 1308 Marguerite was brought before the

new Bishop and the Inquisitor of Lorraine. This time she was accused of propagating it among simple people and beghards. Instead of acting further themselves her judges apparently sent her to Paris where we know that she was taken into custody by the Dominican Inquisitor. There Marguerite refused to answer any questions or even to take the vows necessary for her examination and languished in prison for almost a year and a half. But in 1310 the Inquisitor, for want of direct testimony, extracted a list of articles from Marguerite's book and presented them for examination to twenty-one theological regents of the University of Paris, who unanimously declared the articles to be heretical. 'Mirror of Simple Souls' taught that a soul annihilated in the love of the Creator could, and should, grant to nature all that it desires. It invokes the realms of enlightenment, outstripping the Christian orthodox view, as the higher levels of illumination are reached with an autonomous realization of God-nature or Christ-nature that we are God's sons like Christ without distinction. The Mirror was very popular throughout Europe and was translated into many European languages and had a vigorous life in England.

The Free Spirit movement sanctified the sexual act of intercourse as 'Christerie'. According to John of Viktring's description, men and women of various classes assembled at midnight in an underground hideaway which they named a temple. There 'a priest of the devil' said mass and delivered a sermon. Then the assembly put out the lights, chose partners, and feasted, danced, and fornicated. This, they said, was the state of paradise in which Adam and Eve lived before the fall. Their leader called himself Christ and claimed that though condemned to be executed he would rise on the third day. He presented a beautiful young virgin as Mary, but taught that Christ was not born of a virgin, that God was neither born nor suffered, and that fasting was unnecessary.

The decree of Vienne listed eight errors of an abominable sect of malignant men known as Begherds and faithless women known as beguines in the Kingdom of Germany which are generally considered to be the essence of the Free Spirit heresy. The first tenet was the central one. This stated that man can attain such a degree of perfection in his earthly life that he is incapable of sin. In this state he can achieve no additional grace because such would give him a perfection superior to Christ. The second point followed that such a man need not fast or pray because in his state of perfection sensuality is so subordinated to reason that he can accord freely to his body all that pleases him. Similarly the third point was that such a man is not subject to human obedience or to any laws of the Church because "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). The following five propositions were elaborations or consequences of the first three: man can attain final blessedness just as much in this life as in the other; such men do not need the light of glory to be elevated to the vision and enjoyment of God; the acts of virtue are only necessary for imperfect men, but the perfect soul no longer needs them; a kiss is a mortal sin when nature does not demand it, but the sexual act itself is not sinful when demanded by nature; and it is not necessary to rise or show any sign of reverence during the elevation of the host because to think of the sacrament of the Eucharist or the passion of Christ would be a sign of imperfection and a descent from the heights of contemplation.

Marguerite Porete shared her inquisitional fate with a converted Jew who was supposed to have relapsed and to have spat in a fit of contempt on an image of the Virgin. The reason why scandalous charges were launched, often independently, against medieval heretics is similar to why they were launched so frequently against Jews. The Church considered Jews, sorcerers, and heretics, each in their way, as minions of the devil whose threat was age-old. Christians have never been able to forget that the Jews rejected Jesus and demanded his death. For centuries Christians were convinced that the Jews failure to accept the Christian faith was due to a stubborn perversity that must have the Devil behind it.

Burning of Jews 1390 (Cohn R125)

This gave rise to the legend of the ritual murder of Christian children at Passover, a symbolic perpetuation of the Crucifixion. As late as the sixteenth century the dwellers in the European ghettos lived in continual terror of being framed for this crime by the Christians. Trials for ritual murder were still occurring in Central Europe through the turn of the nineteenth century. In the meantime, the assumption of Jewish depravity had been giving the followers of Christ carte blanche - not merely with a quiet conscience but with fervour and exaltation - to penalize, tax,

torture and slaughter the Jews, under the sign of the crucified Jesus" anticipating Shoah (Wilson R750 104).

In a climactic culmination of centuries of persecution, the Roman Church remained silent in acquiescent knowledge of the holocaust of six million Jews during the second world war.

[Hitler] said it was one of the most important tasks to guard Germany's coming generations from the same political fate that struck the country from 1918 to 1933, to keep vigilant in them the awareness of racial danger. For this reason alone the Oberammergau Festival [the re-enactment of the crucifixion] would absolutely have to be preserved. For hardly ever had the Jewish danger, as seen in the example of the ancient Roman empire, been so graphically illustrated as by the character of Pontius Pilate in the Festival. He appeared as a Roman whose racial and intellectual superiority is so great that he seemed a rock amid the swarming rabble of the Near East. In recognizing the enormous importance of the Festival for the enlightenment of future generations as well, he [Hitler] said he was an absolute Christian. (Rolf Hochhuth, Der Stelivertreter, historische Streiflichter 1980, 247)

The witch hunts form an extension of the Inquisitional process and its greater complex of male paranoia directed right into the heart of European women. Europe had associations with the fertility goddess predating the spread of Christian ideas, as hinted at in the Arthurian legends of Avalon. Appreciation for feminine spirituality, power and medicinal arts continued through the Christian era. European villages still hid many "wise-women" who acted as priestesses officially or unofficially. Since church fathers declared Christian priestesses unthinkable, all functions of the priestess were associated with paganism. These included arts of midwifery, beliefs in fertility worship in rites such as Beltane.

They also involved the use of powerful hallucinogens based on tropane alkaloids, including scopolamine, based on belladonna, henbane and mandrake (Schultes and Hofmann R626 86, Rudgley R597 90). Frequent references can be found in the middle ages to maids found unconscious and naked who had rubbed themselves with a green ointment "in such a way that they imagine they are carried a long distance". The witch's broomstick was also a device to apply such ointments to the vaginal mucosae to induce such 'flying', enough in itself to drive Christian men to madness. The link with the Inquisition is also clear. "Dominus Augustinus de Turre the most cultivated physician of his time notes:

"when the Inquisition of Como was being carried out, in Lugano the wife of a notary of the Inquisition was accused of being a witch and sorceress. Her husband, who was troubled and thought her a holy woman, early on Good Friday when he missed her found her naked in a corner of the pigsty displaying her genitals, completely unconscious and smeared wit the excrement of the pigs. He went to draw his sword but hesitating she awoke and prostrated herself before him confessing that she had gone that night on the journey. When the accusers came to take her for burning she had vanished, possibly drowned in the lake nearby" (Harner R291 134).

Knowledge of the details of such use of herbs was carefully gleaned by the Papal office. The physician of Pope Julius II in 1545 took the jar of ointment of an accused couple seized as witches, which was so heavy and offensive and soporiferous to the ultimate degree, composed of hemlock, nightshade, henbane and mandrake. This was anointed from head to toe on the wife of the hangman who was restless with suspicion of her husband:

"She became comatose and could be wakened by no one for 36 hours with her eyes open like a rabbit. Her first words were 'Why do you wake me at such an inopportune time? I was surrounded by all the pleasures and delights of the world' and to her husband "Knavish one, know that I have made you a cuckold, and with a lover younger and better than you" (R291 135).

Johannes Nieder in 1692 gives the following account of a woman who believed herself to be literally transported through the air during the night with Diana and the other women and invited a priest to witness the event:

"having placed a large bowl on top of a stool, she stepped into it and sat herself down. Then rubbing ointment on herself to the accompaniment of magic incantations, she lay her head back and fell asleep. With the labour of the devil she dreamed of Mistress Venus and other superstitions so vividly that crying out with a shout and striking her hands about, she jarrd the bowl in which she was sitting and falling down from the stool seriously injured herself about the head. As she lay there awakened the priest cried out 'Where are you? You are not with Diana ... you never left this bowl!'" (R291 131).

Remy in the late 16th century makes this matter clear: "Now if witches, after being aroused from an 'iron' sleep tell of things they have seen in places so far distant as compared with the short period of their sleep, the only conclusion is that there had been some substantial journey like that of the soul" (R291 132). A similar explanation applies to lycanthropy the belief that one can change into the form of an animal (R291 140).

Christians perceived in the rites of the horned god and his 'wiccan' counterparts frank coitus with the devil in the form of incubi and succubi. Bishops described pagan gatherings in their dioceses, attended by "devils ... in the form of men and women." John of Salisbury wrote that it was the devil, "with God's permission," who sent people to gatherings in honor of the Queen of the Night, a priestess impersonating the Moon-goddess under the name of Noctiluca or Herodiade. Others taking flying potions invoked Diana.

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex 22:18).

Although Exodus had from old cast a death curse of witchcraft, it had not been illegal. Witchcraft was allowed through the first half of the Christian era. It was not called a "heresy" until the 14th century. In 500 AD the Franks' Salic Law recognized witches' right to practice. In 643, an edict declared it illegal to burn witches. In 785, the Synod of Paderborn said anyone who burned a witch must be sentenced to death.

The phenomenon of the witch hunts became a religious war of a jealous God and his church against women, perpetrated by Catholics and Protestants alike in which by some estimates over four million people died. Geographically, the center of witch-burning lay in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, but few areas were left untouched by it. The chronicler of Treves reported that in the year 1586, the entire female population of two villages was wiped out by the inquisitors, except for only two women left alive. A hundred and thirty-three persons were burned in a single day at Quedlinburg in 1589, out of a town of 12,000. Henri Boguet said Germany in 1590 was "almost entirely occupied with building fires (for witches); and Switzerland has been compelled to wipe out many of her villages on their account. Travelers in Lorraine may see thousands and thousands of the stakes to which witches are bound." In 1524, one thousand witches died at Como. Strasbourg burned five thousand in a period of 20 years. The Senate of Savoy condemned 800 witches at one time. Param stated that over thirty thousand were executed in the 15th century. Nicholas Remy said he personally sentenced 800 witches in 15 years and in one year alone forced sixteen witches to suicide. A bishop of Bamberg claimed 600 witches in 10 years; a bishop of Nancy, 800 in 16 years; a bishop of Wurtzburg, 1900 in 5 years. Five hundred were executed within three months at Geneva and 400 in a single day at Toulouse. The city of Traves burned 7,000 witches. This genocide was not confined to the Catholics. The protestant Lutheran prelate Benedict Carpzov, sentenced 20,000 devil-worshippers. Even relatively permissive England killed 30,000 witches between 1542 and 1736. The slaughter went on throughout Christian Europe for nearly five centuries (Young R774, Walker R721).

The Malleus Maleficarum (Hammer of Sorceresses), written by two Dominican Inquisitors, appeared in Germany in 1486 and became the authoritative handbook describing the activities of witches and how to convict them. The misogyny of this text is hysterical in tone and its authors are fixated on sexuality.

"In the Old Testament the Scriptures have much that is evil to say about women, and this because of the first temptress, Eve, and her imitators; yet afterwards in the New Testament we find a change of name, as from Eva to Ave (as St. Jerome says), and the whole sin of Eve taken away by the benediction of Mary. Therefore preachers should always say as much praise of them as possible. But because in these times this perfidy is more often found in women than in men, as we learn by actual experience, if anyone is curious as to the reason, we may add to what has already been said the following: that since they are feebler both in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come more under the spell of witchcraft. ... And proverbs xi, as it were describing a woman, says: As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion. ... But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives."

The Malleus Maleficarum said the accused witch must be "often and frequently exposed to torture. If after being fittingly tortured she refuses to confess the truth, he [the inquisitor] should have other engines of torture brought before her, and tell her that she will have to endure these if she does not confess. If then she is not induced by terror to confess, the torture must be continued." If she remained obdurate, "she is not to be altogether released, but must be sent to the squalor of prison for a year, and be tortured, and be examined very often, especially on the more Holy Days." Centrally at stake is woman's sexuality itself which is deemed to be insatiable:

"To conclude: All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. See Proverbs 30: There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, a fourth thing which says not, It is enough; that is, the mouth of the womb. Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils" (Malleus Maleficarum 47).

It can hardly be doubted that a major driving force of all witch hunts was sadistic sexual perversion. Torturers liked to attack women's breasts and genitals with pincers, pliers, and red-hot irons. Under the Inquisition's rules, little girls were prosecuted and tortured for witchcraft a year earlier than little boys - at 9, as opposed to 10 for boys. Witch hunting generally was directed against the female sex, and the abject helplessness of imprisoned and tortured women invariably encouraged sexual abuse along with every other kind of abuse

The Malleus Maleficarum served to put a large number of women into immediate jeopardy by stating that the activities of midwives can reveal signs of witchcraft. "That witches who are midwives in various ways kill the child conceived in the womb, and procure an abortion; or if they do not this offer new-born children to Devils." At this time in history the great majority of births were attended by midwives, women familiar with childbirth and herbal cures. In other words these women were healers. They were also the confidants of women who wanted to have children and those who did not want children, so they had some knowledge of birth control and abortion. They were experts in sexual matters in a society dominated by a celibate clergy that had confounded sexuality with devil worship. Once the Malleus Maleficarum made the association of midwives with witchcraft these women could be brought before the Inquisition for questioning. Few were found innocent. Thus begun, the witch burning craze continued into the eighteenth century. (Young R774 79)

From ruthlessly organized persecutions on the continent, witch hunts in England became largely cases of village feuds and petty spite. If crops failed, horses ran away, cattle sickened, wagons broke, women miscarried, or butter wouldn't come in the churn, a witch was always found to blame. A woman was convicted of witchcraft for having caused a neighbor's lameness-by pulling off her stockings. Another was executed for having admired a neighbor's baby, which afterward fell out of its cradle and died. Two Glasgow witches were hanged for treating a sick child, even though the treatment succeeded and the child was cured. Joan Cason of Kent went to the gallows in 1586 for having dry thatch on her roof, which sparked when burnt (Walker R721 1078).

Bobbi Low (R427 163) notes a basis for this in sexual conflict over resources:

"The demographic and economic particulars of witchcraft trials show a pattern that is a logical, if curious, example of conflict over resources and reproduction in a particular culture. The communities in which accusations of witchcraft flourished were communities long torn by internal strife. Witchcraft accusations often originated in property disputes. Women owned almost no property but they were three times as likely to be accused of witchcraft, seven times as likely to be tried, and five times as likely to be convicted of witchcraft then men. Women who held resources alone, and were not likely marriage candidates because their reproductive value was low were significantly more often accused, tried and executed as witches than others".

The edicts that established the Inquisition have never been repealed. They are "officially still part of the Catholic faith, and were used as justification for certain practices as recently as 1969." In January 1998 the Vatican permitted scrutiny of one of the most notorious periods in Roman Catholic Church History when it opened the archives of the department once known as the Inquisition. The secret files, date between 1542 and 1902. The department later became the Holy Office and its successor now is called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which controls the orthodoxy of Catholic teaching.

Unraveling the Sacramental Covenant

Regina Schwartz notes that in its Christian sequel, "the covenant comes not in stone, but in the 'fleshly tables of the heart.' John Donne shockingly depicts such a physical inscription of divinity, as rape, even if it is a bondage he relishes." It is this very bondage and spiritual rape that leads to the male violence of God in history.

Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except y' enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste except you ravish me. (31)

The invective against the great whore of Babylon, the Goddess Ishtar anathema capitalized:

"And upon her forehead was a name written,
MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS
AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Revelation)

is based again on male jealousy of female reproductive choice - a patriarchal desire to split the feminine, contrasting the great whore with the travail 'Miriam' with the twelve stars, standing on the moon, herself another form of Inanna-Ishtar the Queen of Heaven, who long graced the land of milk and honey.

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun,
and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.
And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."

It is ultimately jealousy and motifs of male competition projected on to God which spawned the Crusades, the Inquisition, the holocaust of 6 mllion Jews in Shoah and all the diabolical manifestations of Christianity, from the Colombian Americas to the genocide of witches, the free spirit movement and the gnostic Cathars and Albigenses. This repression was also ironically unraveled by the downfall of Byzantium to the Muslims, liberating the cultural climate of the Renaissance from the Dark Ages, seeding the explosion of scientific knowledge, the industrial revolution, and the rise of social democracies. However the structure of our social institutions, and our attitudes to the world still derive from social coercion. Our lack of interdependence with nature, and our degree of mutual suspicion and resort to the use of lethal force and weapons of mass destruction in the pursuit of a clash of civilizations all stem from patriarchal imperatives coloured by the war of dark and light, a state of crisis, which could bring about our extinction, not only as a culture, but as a species.

This dysfunctional relationship is a 'shotgun marriage' imposed on another type of deeper sexual relationship, which is much more subtle and cosmic. The paradox of an interdependent source

consciousness and physical universe, manifest in each of us, falsely portrayed as an arranged marriage forced on us by a jealous God, fearing the almost perpetual infidelity of 'his' people, first Eve, then Adam, then Israel and then all humanity, in an original sin which reeks of repressed female reproductive choice at its very core.

In all these motifs lie a common attribution of the feminine to the nether realms of chaos and the mortal slime of the physical, while man assumes the role of arbiter of cosmic order from the higher conscious realms. But Hochmah Wisdom stands set up from everlasting, co-primal with to God or even primeval in tohu vu vohu - the primal 'chaos' even before form and void. In accepting the chaotic within the feminine, even in the face of paternity uncertainty, mankind reengages the sustainable complementarity out of which all life flows -the complementary nature of reality on which subjective consciousness and objective reality, wave and particle, and chaos and order are interdependent in giving rise to natural complexity. All our evidence is that this mystery lies deeper than an external creator deity, through the sentient mind and the physical universe being complementary to one another. We are not just a thought in the mind of a god whose psyche is a reflection of an alpha male who has lost, banished or 'liquidated' his omega femme fatale. At the other extreme, the materialism of purely objective science leads to dissolution of the subjective aspect we depend on for our experience as an ephemeral illusion, a mere epi-phenomenon. All our experience of the physical world is gained through the umbilical cord of direct conscious perception, without which it remains unclear the physical universe could have a manifest existence.

The conflict between Yahweh and the whoring Gods and Asherah's groves was a socio-sexual conflict in the transition zone between the quasi-matriarchal society of Laban, where a wife would expect to stay with the her family, and children might be brought up by the wife's immediate relatives, and the staunch patriarchal nomadic shepherd tribes of Jacob and the Benjaminites, where the husband and father ruled. El offered Abraham offspring spermatogenetically as the stars in the sky and the dust of the Earth. Old Testament intimations of sexual violence abound. The dire homicide metered out to the wife of the Jew who stayed too long with her father - raped and left to die in the gutter - attests to this division, as does the crushing of the bones of the practitioners of fertility worship "on every high hill and under every green tree", who by their anonymous celebration of sex, the power of the feminine, and their untamed revelry, confused the narrow division between the faithful wife and the scarlet whore. Every one emphasizes the sexual nature of this 'covenant' with God.

Islam (p 257), although it does not use the terms of jealousy directly in attempting to arrive at a more abstract form of god, in Al-Llah still articulates the principal themes of male combat myth against the 'infidel', rejection of the female deities which previously accompanied the old high god, and the jealous anger of god in the face of those who do not 'submit' to al-Llah's will. The world is divided between the domain of Islam and the domain of war in an apocalyptic end of days which abets suicidal martyrdom in acts of mass terror. Those who embrace Islam and then have doubts face the death penalty for apostasy, as do all infidels except the believers in the paths of the book - the hanif of Abraham, Jews and Christians. Islam attempts to bind Religion, Law (Sharia) and State into one totalitarian monolith. Islam remains the only religion today in which women are stoned for adultery and female genital mutilation is approved. Although polygynous Islam perceives sex as positive, by comparison with the negative spin given it as original sin fit only for procreation in Christianity, it fears the power and capriciousness of female lust so much that women are secluded in all-enveloping veils, so we may not even be able to see their eyes, let alone their breasts and buttocks and legs, as evolution selected us to do. They remain subject to strict codes of chaperoning, under potentially dire punishment for any deviation, even though heaven is conceived as an erotic garden with 72 black-eyed virgins. A woman is only half the value of a man in legal disputes and less than the dogs in the street in the hadiths. This is little different from the role of woman in the ten commandments in terms of the jealousy of coveting, where the wife is a possession of the husband, more than a beast, but less than a house:

The root message is that our relationship with God has become a sado-masochistic sexual perversion in the name of paternity uncertainty and fear of female sexual energy, which has, in a variety of forms, infiltrated the spontaneous and good nature of human society, to erect a coercive set of social institutions based on male exploitation, frankly risking the end of the world, and a

boom and bust confrontation, which could terminate humanity through its very exploitation. This leads to alienation, social injustice and a war of defection between social control and criminality. Along with the violent repression of female reproductive choice through a variety of means, in Helen Fisher's words from 'An Anatomy of Love': "public whipping, branding, beating, ostracism, mutilation of genitals, chopping off nose and ears, slashing feet, chopping off one's hips and thighs, divorce, desertion, death by stoning, burning, drowning, choking, shooting, stabbing", and the frank desecration of women in killing the girl child across much of Asia. Even in our so-called enlightened society, it is signal that the men of this generation are still only beginning to come to terms with how women achieve sexual ecstasy, how to yield to the paradox of this 'divine' feminine force and the challenge to our relationships and social structures female sexuality and the female reproductive investment in continuity and egalitarian networks might bring.

In Kabbalistic thought, the feminine face the Shekhinah retreats in the Fall from paradise, remaining aloof until the final phase , returning as fragmented 'sparks' into integration of the male 'torah' with the feminine face. Closing the circle of jealousy in love means closing the war of dark and light in the matrimonial concord the Shekhinah evokes, as reflected in the pregnant 'queen of heaven' in Revelation departing to the wilderness for a time and a half on Shekhinah's eagle wings, holding the apocalyptic keys to the resolution of the whole existential dilemma of the fall, and with it God's insane jealousy for his paternity.

Holy matrimony, unlike the property heritage of patrimony, arises from the whole condition of relationship, embracing as much the inscrutable reproductive investment of the mother as the desire for paternity certainty of the father.