

Ba'al Theory of Christianity Executive Summary

To begin with, this is not a work about religious beliefs, but books that look at how political and social events led to the creation of religious beliefs and rituals. This is a book about the mundane, not the sacred.

This set of writings, compiled into two books, argues three basic themes:

1) Christianity's central notion, that God sacrificed his only begotten son to save the world, almost certainly has its sole source in the religion of the Canaanites; with its beloved god Ba'al. We argue that Ba'al, the god portrayed in the Old Testament as the great rival god of Yahweh, who's worship was considered by the prophets as an abomination, is in fact the model for the Christ story; and Christianity is a "morphed" version of the Ba'al legend; not a "reformed" version of the Judaism; nor a new covenant with the Yahweh.

While not denying other influences on the development of Christianity (Egypt, Greek mystery religions, Persian dualism, etc) we argue that at its core the basis of the Christian religion is a revitalization of the concepts of the need for human sacrifice to placate a god, a concept of a deep ancient past, rooted in Ba'alism and one repressed for only a short while by both the Jews and the Classical world, but brought back in a morphed version by a "new church" with very ancient stories retold.

2) We also argue that the rituals of human sacrifice so associated with Ba'al continued for centuries after the Christian triumph in Western Europe. We see this continuation of Ba'alist rituals in such events as the Auto de Fe in Spain and witch burnings throughout Western Europe. When considered from a non-Christian point of view the similarities between the ancient rituals of Ba'al and the public burnings of heretics and witches are too close to be independent of each other; and

3) The justification of forced religious conformity, in fear of the wrath of God for failing to comply with "his" laws, first developed by the small Jewish colony founded after the Persian defeat of Babylonia, and then later greatly expanded under the Christian churches not only created for centuries a state of religious tyranny in Western Europe, and then later the Americas, but was the foundation for the justification for the 20th centuries state's efforts at forced conformity and justification for the mega deaths created by these states.

All three of these themes are linked together by exploring how Ba'alism, in its morphed form of Christianity, became the dominate religion in the Western world

I.

In the first book of the series, dealing with the influence of Ba'alism on the development of Christianity, we look at the origins of human sacrifice as part of the religious rituals of the ancient world; and how for some time it was considered a normal part of the religious process; including the sacrifice of the first born. We explore the great power, influence and colonization practices of the Phoenicians/Canaanites which led to the spread of this religious practice throughout Europe and North Africa.

We compare this spectacular success of the worshipers of Ba'al with the slow development, and near failure, of the Jewish religion. We also explore how this nearly eliminated religion revitalizes itself and become abhorrent of human sacrifice and come to believe that the practice had incited God's wrath against them to the extent that He permitted the destruction of their nations and first temple.

We then look at the social and religious chaos that was created by the rush into the Eastern Mediterranean of Persian, Greek and Roman world views, and how they conflicted with the ancient beliefs of both the Phoenicians and "Jews" living in the area. We will see how the Jews fought against the changes in culture and religion and were nearly exterminated and how the followers of Ba'al, although defeated in arms, actually retold their story with Christ as Ba'al and eventually led to the creation of a triumphant "new" religion that was simply a morphed version of the very ancient story of the Phoenicians and Canaanites.

II.

In the second book of this series we look the consequences of the development of the new Christian church and how the Ba'alist rituals of human sacrifice were morphed into Christian rituals the led to the death of millions of persons. These people died, not in religious wars, (which account for millions of other deaths) but in well designed rituals in which persons were burned alive to appease the Christian god (such as the Auto de Fe's of Spain, and the witch burnings throughout Western Europe.) and to ward off the wrath of God; much as the rituals of the Ba'alist religion required people burned alive in highly ritualized burnings to appease their gods. The Christians used this ritual of burning to enforce religious "purity." We project modern states of Europe took this Christian demand for capital punishment for violation of religious purity as the justification for the mass exterminations of the 20th Century to preserve the integrity of the state (racial or social purity as opposed to religious purity). We can see a direct line from the Christian inquisitions to the slaughters in Nazi Germany and Stalin Russia.

III.

To demonstrate these claims, as well as to demonstrate why they are not within the mainstream of current historical and religious thought, we must discuss and synthesize our historical understanding of the founding of Christianity, and the process that led to it becoming the dominant religion within the later Roman world. Much of what historians understand of this several millennia period is not understood by the lay public who mainly bought into the common Christian myths. Even some historians who have specialized in one aspect of this period may not accurately understand its entirety. Demonstrating our claims will require us to focus on the following areas, where the historical record is clearly at odds with the Christian Bible and/or traditional Christian and Western understanding.

- The success and spread of the Ba'alistic religion, primarily through the Phoenicians and Carthaginians.
- The relative failures of the early Judaism, more aptly called here the "Yahwehist" people, to maintain a state and to spread their religion beyond their small cult,
- The major social, religious and political conflicts created by the "clash of civilizations" that occurred with the rise of the Persia and later the Roman and Greek Classical world, and the occupation of the lands of the Ba'alistic and Yahwehist by the peoples with these new concepts.
- The major social, religious and political conflicts that resulted in the "fall" of the Western Roman Empire, the preservation of the Eastern Roman Empire and how various groups and religions saw as the causes for these events.

IV.

This work is a complex and looks at millennia of history. Before we can truly tell the facts that lead to the conclusions, we also need to spend a great deal of time attempting to disavow much of what is accepted as valid history in the Christian dominated West. Therefore, there are a number of "introductory essays" attempting to help the reader gain a perspective of history that is not dominated by Christian thought who present a world view that justified the religion as the "good news" to the world. We need to make people aware of the limited and relative unimportance of the people known in the Bible as a series of names including Hebrews, Israelites, Judeans, and eventually as Jews as part of the world history of the time. We need to show the evidence that much of the history of this people (or these different peoples) has no foundation in history, while much of the history that can be supported by facts concerning both these people and the other nations of the time makes no room for a great kingdom of David or Solomon (or the Exodus, or the conquest of Canaan etc.)

And quite the opposite of the view of the Bible and therefore a history much repressed in Western thought is the great success and wealth of the followers of the Biblical "rival" of God and the Jews, the much condemned god Ba'al, and the

people who worshiped him, the Phoenicians/Canaanites. Highly supported history shows these people to be among the most important in human history and they, and their culture is in fact the foundation of much of Western civilization.

And it was the religion of the Canaanites that was by far the most influential in the region called the Holy Land, and when there was great social collapse and political change, it was to this religion of Ba'al that many turned to for relief. And eventually we will see how it was the rituals of Ba'al that became the foundation for Christianity, not the newly created monotheism of the late developed Jews.

- We will see that the most likely, if in fact, the only likely source for what has been referred as the "New Testament in a nutshell," the idea that God sacrificed his only begotten son to save the world, is Ba'alism.

In addition, we will show that perhaps the major difference between the Jews of the time, at the time of the foundation of Christianity, who had worked hard to purge themselves of the belief in the need for a human sacrifice to please God, and the new religion that became Christianity was not just the question of the divinity of Christ, but the concept of Christ's death was a return to the older concepts of the Canaanites. The very foundation of the new Jewish religion was abhorrence of human sacrifice; they in fact blamed their defeats and exile and destruction of their first temple as God's wrath against them for the practices of the human sacrifice ritual by both their kings and peoples of the time of the two kingdoms. To the Jews of the time Christianity seemed to be the revitalization of the only recently repressed Ba'alistic rite or human sacrifice.

V.

As must be apparent with the opening statements; these works are not religious books, but books that look at "religious events" as part of the social and political development of society. They show how the political and social events of the times were often put in religious terms by the people living through the events and how the outcomes of these social and political events altered the religious views of the people of the time. The books are written from the concept that "not much is really sacred" and therefore as much as possible stays away from concepts of the divine and focuses on the mundane of political and social realities.

There are many problems in creating works such as these, including having to more or less create terms and ideas that are not always completely accurate or precise. For example the term I use to describe the religion of the Canaanite/Phoenicians/Carthaginian peoples, Ba'alism, is not completely a historically accurate term, nor one that truly represents the religion of the region, (since the chief god of these peoples' pantheon was El) but it is a term that fits well into modern concepts of religion and I will use it to fit the understandings of the modern reader. For example, today the chief God of Christianity is God, or

Yahweh, but the religion is called Christianity after it's the central person/god/person-god of its foundation story.

It is even a bit more complex with Ba'al or Ba'alism, in the sense that the term Ba'al was and can be used as

- The name of a particular god (the storm god of the Canaanites) with a great epic poem associated with his adventures and struggle (as Jesus) with "death."
- A title for any god or ruler or noble (the way Lord is used in English) So, therefore in local areas, the term "Ba'al Jesus" would have been common, as would Ba'al David or Solomon, with different meanings according to each persons title or claim to divinity. And El could have been called Ba'al El or simply "Ba'al" (or the lord God).
- Or a reference to the collective religion of the Canaanites, which consisted of many gods and goddesses, of whom Ba'al was one --- such as Hindu is used to refer to the pantheon of India with all its gods and writings ...

Throughout the books, I will use the term Ba'al or my collective term of Ba'alism or Ba'alist mostly in third manner ... except where specifically point out as reference to the storm god or a title.

In addition, looking at writing a piece that covers such a broad stretch of time a problem arises in how to address the people who are the focus of the Old Testament. Their book itself refers to them with several terms based on the time and location in history; as noted -Hebrews, Israelites, Judeans, and eventually as Jews (only first used as a term in the Book of Esther, whose story takes place at least one hundred and fifty years after the destruction of the first temple). So, I link the terms when needed and also use the term Yahwehist to represent all the names at some various point in their history. And once again this use is not accurate, since according to the Book of Exodus, at the incident of the "burning bush" God tell Moses the true name of God, a word the Jews find so sacred it should never be spoken, and is translated into English as Yahweh and in this meeting God tell us that in fact Abraham and the patriarchs worshiped him as El (the name of the chief god of the Canaanites). So it is unclear if we can even refer the Hebrews in Abrahamic time up until the time of the Exodus as Yahwehist. It's is simple difficult to be completely accurate and therefore, I use terms that are helpful to the reader, and the best I can to reflect "true history."

Again, much of these works look at the major concept, that actually separated Christianity from the Jews, and from other "death and rising" savior gods religions of the ancient world, in Christianity there is a some what overly and some what coded statement of the need to seal a covenant with God through human sacrifice, and the death of Jesus was that sacrifice.

- Again, this book presents the argument that the Canaanite religion is the only likely source from the ancient world for this critical component of

Christianity. And in fact, at the time of the foundation of Christianity this concept of a needed human sacrifice to God was considered by the Jews of the time as the most-wicked of all sins and the practice of which was the cause for the destruction of their first temple and their exile in Babylon.

VI.

In some detail we look at the Christian rejection of this argument that Christ was a human sacrifice and much of the Christian world denies that the death of Christ was a “human sacrifice.” However, the main objection to the use of that term is that Christ was not human and therefore the dying on the cross was not in anyway a human sacrificial process. This logic was presented in the early second century of the Christian era, by writers collectively referred to as “Christian apologist” and remains today as the primary line of most Christian churches concerning this claim. There is no denying that the act of Christ death was a “sacrifice” and a “sacrifice by God” or “to God” but the Christians deny the connection to other practices of human sacrifice only by denying Christ was human.

However, as we will see throughout the New Testament there are overt and subtle statements to support that the early Christians themselves saw the act of Christ death as indeed a old style human sacrifice and several modern fundamentalist approaches to Christian belief sees that only through the act of Christ sacrifice can the road to salvation be achieved. To put it simply in the words of modern day Christians, Christ, like the sacrificial lamb of some cultures and some societies and the human sacrifices of others, Christ died for our sins.

- **Hebrews 10:10-12** “ . . . we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ . . . But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.”
- **1 Corinthians 5:7** “ . . . For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”
And
- **John 3:16-18** - For God so loved the world, that he gave *his only Son (ton huion ton monogenee)*, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name *of the only Son of God (tou monogenous tou huio tou theou).*”

And at the time of Christ, the Greeks and Romans mostly, but not completely, rejected the concept of direct human sacrifice. And the Greeks saw that human sacrifice was used at various times in their key work of culture, the *Iliad*, but mainly rejected its use in their “modern times.” The Romans had already changed the story of what appears to be a human sacrifice at the foundation of Rome (Romulus and Remus) to one of brother killing brother over the size of the

walls of the city. The practice among the Romans however continued in the indirect form of the gladiator games.

The book looks at other cultural stories related to human sacrifice including some sort of death that at first appears to be a story of a human sacrifice and later changed as societies moved away for the concept as valid; Dido of Carthage and the near sacrifice of Isaac are two of the more famous stories that seem to echo the time when sacrifice was needed for the foundation of a city or a new “covenant with God.”

In fact, we read in history of at least two times where the Romans adopted the overt use of human sacrifice both in relationship to the Ba’alist practices. The first being when Hannibal “was at the gates” of Rome, and the Senate approved the sacrifice of children of the senatorial class to mimic the Carthaginian practice and then later when an emperor adopted Ba’al as the chief (universal) god of Rome and began sacrificing the children of senators to the god as part of its overall rituals. Through these and other sources we find that idea of human sacrifice was current in the area of the Christ story and also not directly condemned by the major cultures of the time, except by one; the Jews.

The concept of the need for human sacrifice seems to have been in use throughout the Ba’alist world in the centuries (if not millennia) leading up to the time of the Christ sacrifice, and from some sources it continued at least for another two hundred years or so after the death of Jesus. At least according to what sources remain, and admittedly bias sources, human sacrifice continued as a major important ritual with the Canaanites including the Phoenicians, and in their extensive colonies throughout the Mediterranean right up to the destruction of the areas by the Greeks in the East and the Romans in the West (Carthage et al). It appears to have maintained itself for centuries only to be briefly revived in Rome during the early third century AD.

One of the most important times that this sacrifice was required in this Ba’alist religion was when there was a new “covenant” with the God, for the founding of a city, or the founding of a new tribe; the human sacrifice was needed to solidify the contract. And in the book we argue that since Christ represented a new covenant with God to replace the failed one that had taken place with Abraham, according to the local religious traditions, a human sacrifice was needed to complete the process.

Another time for the use of human sacrifice was of great danger to the people and society ... a city under attack, a people in revolt. And we can see how the people of the time saw a great danger from the Roman control of the region and the failures of many revolts against the new power. It was truly a time of great danger to the people and according to the ancient practices of the region a human sacrifice was needed, to save the people.

VII.

However, according to history and the Bible, the Jews of the time of Christ were one of the people, if only peoples, in complete opposition to the rites of human sacrifice. According to the later books of the Bible (Chronicles, Jeremiah, Ezra etc) the chief crime of the Judeans that causes God's wrath and the conquest of the people by the Assyrians and Babylonians was the extensive use of child sacrifice by the "wicked" kings of Judea and Israel. The Bible talks of the use of "passing children through the fire" by Judean kings and commoners alike right up until the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians; and how the prophets kept insisting that God did not want this, but for some reason (to be later explained) the kings and people continued the practice the condemned rite until complete defeat occurred.

Then, while in exile, in Babylon, the Judeans, on the way to becoming Jews, identified that it was this act of sacrifice of children as the cause for the downfall of their state and the destruction of their temple. And, while in exile, moved to change their history and legends and their religion, to expunge this practice completely from their "hearts and minds." The people of the exile became the Jews, with a new version of the Bible and a new very controlled centralized concept of sacrifice, which was completely opposed to the old practices that the exiles saw as what led to their downfall.

It appears that while in exile the story of Abraham and Isaac was created or changed to show God's disfavor with the idea of human sacrifice. We need to view this story in the context of the times prior to exile and during the exile. Prior to the exile this story, if the sacrifice was completed, would fit normally into the Canaanite practice of the time for the establishing a covenant with god by the sacrifice of the first born.

However, the sudden change in the course of events leading up to the sacrifice and the sacrificing of a lamb fit into the new Jewish aversion of the practice, where the practice is condemned. We should note that ancient traditions say that Isaac was sacrificed and spent three years in Paradise and then returned, or another was he was cut and killed but his spirit was immediately returned to his body, and among other stories he was truly sacrificed and that in return Abraham was given six new sons (and the listing of the news sons remains today in the Bible.) It is interesting to note that some Christians have seen that the failure of Abraham to complete the sacrifice was the reason the Abrahamic/Jewish covenant failed, and that Christ's actual death was required for the new covenant to come into effect.

It is also important to note that there were other changes in the Bible to adjust older tradition, including the one most germane to this projection. In Exodus, within days of leaving Egypt Yahweh claims for himself the first of everything including the first born of all Hebrews ..." all that comes first from the Matrix is mine." However, in Deuteronomy, a work scholars all agree was written far later,

either just before the exile or while in exile, the story of God's claim is revised to tell how the people can buy off God or "redeem the first born" with a certain amount of metal or other gift. Again, the later Bible gives the people the "out" from the tradition of human sacrifice while not altering too much the original well known story itself. The ancient stories were well known and how they were altered was critical to leading to acceptance by the followers of the new interpretations or new endings.

VIII.

What we will show is that critical to social, political and religious development of the "West" is in fact a new concept that was created in the Exile. This concept which is explored in detail in Book One is one of collective responsibility for religious purity. It was something that first seems to appear in the West with the Jews of the return. These Jews, or at least the leadership of these Jews, so feared the return of the wrath of God that had led to the destruction of their nation and temple, that they claimed that God demanded the absolute compliance of all of his people to the religious laws of the land, not just the traditional ancient concept that it was the role of the king and priest to keep the gods happy.

With the return of the Exiles, the leaders required all to adhere or face capital punishment for the crimes. The interpretation of the cause of the exile was not that just the kings were sacrificing their children to God but common people were doing the same. And God wanted all to stop the practice. The leaders of the new Jewish religion took the effort one step further and insisted that all the rules of the new laws, the 613 commandments of the Bible had to be obeyed completely or the whole people ran the risk of the wrath of God returning. The leaders created the first state similar to Taliban Afghanistan that the world had ever seen.

This was truly a novel idea in the Ancient world which was relatively speaking a very open society for religious beliefs. Almost all beliefs were if not accepted, respected to some degree by most rulers. And in fact we see great break downs in societies and great revolts against rulers when they tried to impose religion in some absolutist fashion, until, that is, the establishment of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. And we read in the writings of the leaders of the return resistance to their laws as well, especially dealing with marriage to foreign women.

The returning Jews established a small and relatively isolated religious state based on an absolutist requirement for conformity. And for a short while under the protection of the Persians the state existed as a small island of absolutist Yahwehist culture. All that changed however with the coming of the Greeks, and then the Romans. Some Jews rejected Judaism and "went Greek" only to become targets of the Jews themselves in later revolts using the absolutist Jewish views and the fear of the return of the wrath of God as the basis for their risings against the new rulers of the land.

However, some four hundred years after the return of the Jews to Judea, along comes a new cult out of the peoples who never went into exile, (Galilee) and never went through this purging of the love of human sacrifice, and had only recently been forced converted to the new Jewish law of the 613 commandments. And this new cult claimed that God had sacrificed his only begotten son to save the world.

To the Jews of the time, this claim must have seemed like a direct return to the practices of the old Canaanite religion and pre exile Yahwehist culture which mainly followed the same practices. And the belief more then echoed the reason most saw as the cause for the destruction of the first temple (and some thirty or forty years after the cult develops, the second temple is destroyed, the wrath of God had returned.)

IX.

Few references of Christ as Ba'al or as the human sacrifice in the writings that have survived to this day; the Christians triumphed and would have destroyed all such discussions (well almost all such discussions) The question of the difference between Christians and Jews always seems to be played in the "Christian ballpark" with focused on the Christian question of why the Jews rejected the divinity of Jesus, not on the question of if the Jesus story was a "morphed" version of the old Ba'alist practice of sacrificing the first born in time of crisis or to seal a deal with God. For example, we never see the question of if the Christian focus on sacrifice of the first born son caused the destruction of the second temple (as the Old Testament states was the cause for the first temple destruction) because that would have linked Christ with the ancient religion of the Ba'alist.

To justify the claim that the core concept of Christianity is Ba'alist in nature we need to prove that the religion of the Canaanites

- was not a dead thing at the time of the Christ story, although represented as such in the time Old Testament and much of modern history; nor
- a minor localized religion of a people who fell to Israelite conquest. We need to show what is well known among the ancient peoples and that Ba'alism was in fact a vital and major religion throughout much of the whole "civilized history" of the Mediterranean basin; a religion that was dominate in that region for thousands of years and came close to being the religion of the "winning sides" in the "world wars" of the time (The Greek/Persian wars and the Roman/Carthage wars).

This in the Book One we do; we also show that

- Ba'alism in one of its many forms was still competing in the "market place" of religious ideas at the time of Christ.

We will show that Ba'alism was not only active, it was actually the first choice of the Roman emperors for of the universal religion that fit the new Roman concepts of government and religion One Emperor; One God. In fact, Christianity was the fourth choice for this role.

X.

Therefore, to really understand the linkage between Christianity and Ba'alism the reader needs to be far better aware of the history of this Canaanite religion, as well as the real history of the Canaanites, so wrongfully represented in the Bible and by current history in the West, whose presentation is still mainly based on the Christian religious views (rather than true historic facts). In fact, the reader truly should be aware of the development of religious beliefs in Western society. Therefore, some of the early parts of Book One gives an overview of that development of religion from what we can call currently known historic facts. Obviously, these facts change with more and more discoveries, including the recent findings of what appear to be religious sites dating back some 12,000 years (near the current Turkish and Syrian borders.) These finds will again force us to re-evaluate our concept of cultural and religious development in the West, but mostly have little direct bearing on this book.

Other finds have direct impact on the thesis of this book; in Syria and Lebanon discovery of old cities created a far greater understanding of the Canaanite world and how it was in fact one of the great cultures of the ancient world. Through these finds we are now aware that the Canaanites (through their Northern elements, the Phoenicians) created one of the first great trading empires of history. We also now know that many of the modern cities in the Mediterranean area are rebuilt Phoenician/Canaanite cities, and much of the religion of the Mediterranean cultures, including Greece and Rome religions, are retellings of Ba'alist myths.

So to claim that Christianity was built on the Ba'alist myth is somewhat justified alone by saying that much of the Classical religion of the West was previously built on Ba'alism. However, the link of Ba'al to Christianity appears to be far more than second hand influence. The influence of the religion was very powerful and continued to be so long after the decline and eventual total destruction of the Ba'alist home world and all of its empire.

XI.

The Romans recognized this contribution to the foundations of the West. In 3 AD Dyonysius of Susiana, was paying tribute to the Phoenicians by saying:

Upon the Tsurian sea the people live
Who style themselves Phoenicians...

These were the first great founders of the world --
Founders of cities and of mighty states –

Who showed a path through seas before unknown.

But, we today, in the mainly Christian West know little of their greatness because they, the Canaanites/Phoenicians in their time, far overshadowed the greatness of the “chosen people,” the Hebrews, or Israelites or the Judeans or the Jews, as the name of the people transitioned over time. In the sacred book of the Christians and Jews, the Bible, the Canaanites, and Ba'alism are portrayed as the greatest enemy of God, Yahweh, and the religious practices as abominations. Therefore, even today in our schools we are told little of the greatness of the Canaanite peoples (not to be in conflict with Biblical stories) and we are continuing to teach much of unproven and over exaggerated importance of the history of the ancient “Jews.”

For example, the people who we refer to today as the Phoenicians actually referred to themselves as Canaanites and saw little or no difference between themselves and the peoples who occupied the prosperous cities to the South of them which over time became the lands of the Jews. The so called Phoenicians and so called Canaanites, made different peoples by the Bible and the Greeks were in fact by their own viewing the same peoples with the same culture and the same religion.

In fact, despite Biblical condemnation the Phoenicians/Canaanites, the people of Ba'al, prospered and over the course of some 850 years (from 1200 BC to 340 BC) mostly successfully resisted or at least fended off the great conquerors of the time, and created great cities far away (such as Carthage) and became rich with trade traveling as far away as what is called England. During this same time period, the peoples of Yahweh, by their own account suffered 400 years of slavery, a difficult and incomplete taking of the “promise land” and repeated defeats by Philistines and Egyptians, and eventually complete conquests and destruction of their kingdoms by the Assyrians and Babylonians. To the traditional mind set of the peoples of the time, the gods of the Canaanites/Phoenicians must have seemed far more powerful than the god of Israel/Judea.

And the claim in the Bible to the great “empire” of David and Solomon is both, according to their own account, ephemeral, lasting at most one hundred years, and according to modern scholarship and research not defensible as reality, since there have been virtually no archeological finds to support the claims of the Bible to David or Solomon and no reports of any contemporary peoples of a great Yahwehist empire in the timeslot allotted to this apparent mostly mythical empire. From the actual historical findings, it's more likely that David, if he did exist at all, was more of a Robin Hood than a Charlemagne.

And indeed much of the presentation in the first book is showing the now known real and very important history involved in the rise and fall of the Phoenician

states and comparing it to the relatively unimportance of the actual known history of the rise and fall of the Yahwehist states.

XII.

This political history is critical because this work approaches the task of linking Ba'al and Christianity based on two major premises, and a third vital understanding.

The two premises are:

1) A study of history shows that religious beliefs mostly do not really end and are mostly consistent over long periods of history. Rather than ending, they mostly evolve or “morph” into other practices and rituals that are based on the general premise of the older religion. Much of what is found in today’s religions are variations of the most ancient of religious themes and practices. Often, the origins of a given idea or practice are hard to track or identify, but are readily identifiable to those willing to look with an open mind;

- Examples of this practice are numerous. We can see ancestor worship still widely practiced in some form or another throughout much of Asia, but also in the form of saint veneration in the West. Saints can also be seen as continuation of the worship of “demigods” or minor gods of polytheistic worship of the past. And one of the most interesting and much studied is the morphing of Aztec religion into the modified form of Catholic religion practiced in Mexico.

And in addition, the second premise is:

2) Political events drove the shaping of religion views over time. And that major political changes in a given region caused major religious changes to occur.

We see this in the changing of the religion of the ancient world with the coming of the rule of the Persians with their ideas of dualism and the conflict between the forces of good and evil (the first religion with a real devil) versus the old concept of gods with both good and evil sides to them. We also see this in the tremendous social and political turmoil created by the arrival of the Hellenistic/Classical world through first Alexander and then Rome; and how the clashes between the Greek concept of logic and science, and the more Ancient concepts of the importance of the Gods created great social upset, and eventually what appeared to be new religions.

In more modern times we see how Islam spread and Christianity first retreated and lost ground and then later revitalized based almost exclusively on the rise and fall of military powers that supported one religion or the other. One case in point is Albania who went in some 1,000 years from being “pagan” to “classicalist” to Christian and then back to pagan, and then to Christian again, and then to Muslim depending upon the religion of the next wave of conquerors.

Or Egypt who went from the from being the center of the Osiris religions for several thousand years to the center of Greek thinking (at least in Alexandria) to the one of the main Christian strong points and rival for the “See of Peter” to becoming mainly Muslim, again over the course of some 1000 years, and again based on the political events occurring. And perhaps we should point out Canaan/Israel/Judah which went from Ba’alist to Yahwahist to Classicalist to Christian to Muslim and back and forth between Christian and Muslim for some two hundred years or so (the Crusades) then back to Muslim to now half Yahwahist/Jewish and half Muslim, all based on political actions.

These two premises may appear slightly contradictory since one says that religions mainly are consistent over time and the other saying major changes in religion can be tracked through major political changes. They are not contradictory since the first does not reject the idea that new religious beliefs occurring, only that the occurrence of the new beliefs are often sparked by major political events and that when the new ones come about old ones continue in the new religious systems in other guises or forms.

The clearest example of this morphing is the linkage between the mother goddess, who at one time in documented history was considered the prime if not only deity. With the rise of the Sky Gods, (which is mostly linked to the invasion of the “Indo Europeans”) the mother goddess role was not eliminated but greatly reduced or morphed into different forms such as Mary in the Catholic Church. This linkage between Mary and the old mother goddess religions is greatly rejected by that church, however, the historic links (including the type of titles that is given to Mary and the types of prays offered to her) and “evidence trail” is clearly there.

The third point, that being the “understanding” that is needed to give a fair hearing to the projection of these books, is summed up in the saying that “the victors write the history”. Another way of saying this is simple that all history is biased; and is, in fact, “his story.” Therefore, since the story of the losers is seldom told and what is written is very biased

- Much of what we think we know about history is mostly false; and
- Some of what he think is history is completely false; and
- The rest of history that we know ... well it’s clearly biased.

For example, as already noted, the David and Solomon tales from the Bible fit very closely into the category of “completely false.” The statement that “Rome ruled the known world” is also mostly false, and outright biased since the Romans were well aware of Persia (and fought and mostly lost to them a great deal) India and China with whom they traded and had dreams of fighting. And of course they knew very well of the Germans and Huns whom they could not “civilize” nor conquer.

In addition, the Biblical history of the relationship between the Ba’alist and Yahwahist also seems to fit into the completely false category.

- In fact, almost all the historic facts of the Bible prior to the arrival of the Assyrians have been called into question by modern archeologist and historians, including the Exodus and the conquest under Joshua.

The latest theories supported by research show more that the people who evolved into the Jews were something like the founders of Rhode Island or Connecticut in that they were religious dissenters who left more civilized areas and attempted to settle relatively empty and thought to be somewhat useless lands.

XIII.

As we point out in book one, there was actually relatively little difference between the two religions (the follower of Yahweh and the followers of Ba’al) in practices and beliefs. We now know with the discovery and translation of extensive Canaanite texts that Yahweh was in fact a god of Ba’alism and perhaps, based on interpretation of the texts a brother of Ba’al, the great storm god of the Canaanites. In addition, much of the religious practices of what was to become the Jewish were practiced by the Ba’alist including almost all elements of what became the Passover feast (for the Canaanites it was a barley harvest festival complete with no leavening, dipping of herbs and ritual lamb slaughter, rather than a story of fleeing from Egypt.) Many of the psalms in the Bible are found almost word for word in the ancient text of the Canaanites.

It now appears that the Old Testament is a series of traditions created to give a break away Canaanite group or groups who saw Yahweh as the better god, and who settled in the remote highland of the area, a history that was different than their “brothers” who continued to worship Ba’al; a history that represented their God, Yahweh, gifting them the land over their rival god and a history that showed their rival god as the evil force and their god as the good force.

And as with almost all histories written about rivals and “the other,” the history in the Bible about the Canaanite peoples is almost not to be trusted. Which puts me as the author in a problematic situation since much of the references to the

Ba'alist practices of child sacrifice comes from the Bible. How, as untrustworthy these references can be, and have been called into question by non-religious researchers, many of the Bible's references to human sacrifice comes from that time period in the later kingdom periods and during the wars with the Assyrians and Babylonians, when the facts are more supported by outside sources. The references in the Bible are to Judean and Israelite kings conducting the practice in the fashion of the Canaanites and other local kingdoms; so this too could be propaganda against kings not liked by given prophets, but it adds to the possibility of the practices occurring. One key point is that the Bible also points out how at the time there was actually little difference between the religions rituals of Ba'al and Yahweh (including the belief the Yahweh had a consort.)

In addition, adding to the validity issue, the other key resource for the practices of the Ba'alist is Roman writers. They wrote during or after the horrendous and tragic Punic wars where Rome lost many battles and came close to destruction, and eventually Carthage itself was destroyed. Again, it is likely that the reports about Ba'alist rituals, especially one concerning human sacrifice coming out of these Roman writings are also biased, but many of these surviving Roman writings report similar things so we have some basis for acceptance.

And, in fact, the Bible and Roman writings which at the time of their writing were not likely connected, report somewhat similar practices of the Ba'alist rituals, especially in the area of human sacrifice. Therefore, the independent writings occurring hundreds of years apart make it likely that such events occurred. The archeological evidence also tends to support the idea of human sacrifice as being a normal part of the religious practices of the Ba'alist, but there is controversy as to the interpretation of the findings in Carthage and other areas of mass burials of burnt bones of children. While many see this as conclusive evidence of the practice of child sacrifice in Carthage, others question the conclusions.

XIV.

Therefore, to lay a foundation for the recognition that human sacrifice was a major part of the Ba'alist tradition, some of the first book covers a review of the evidence as to if the Canaanites/Phoenicians did in fact practice human sacrifice, and if so to what scale and for what purposes. The conclusions are basically they did in fact practice the rituals (as did the Israelite and Judean kingdoms that existed prior to the exile), and that it was used extensively at certain times, primarily in time of crisis. In addition, human sacrifice was used in a more limited fashion as part of major events including founding of new cities or in signing of peace agreements.

- Therefore the book provides evidence that gives a foundation for linkage of Christianity to Ba'alism in that we can see that the religion was one of major importance, it used human sacrifice as a major component of ritual

and it was active (if not rather beaten up) at the time of the development of Christianity.

In addition, based on the premise of political actions changing religious views, much of the first book needs to address how people in given areas responded to the political events helped bring about the major religious changes of the time. The premise of this book is that there are various responses to these religious and political changes by the affected peoples; understanding these responses is also critical to understanding the premise of this work. To attempt to explain the processes involved in the relationship between political and religious changes I classify the four options to major religious and political change as:

- Accepters;
- Resisters;
- Mergers; and
- Morphers.

The first two actions are somewhat self-evident in what newly conquered people did. Within the Jewish history, for example, when the Greeks came in through the conquest of Alexander the Great, many Jews rushed to take advantage of the new “Hellenistic culture” and began dressing and acting like the Greeks (the accepters), while over time as Greek rulers came to demand that all people “act Greek” an armed rebellion started through the leadership of the family soon known as the Maccabees (an example of the resisters) Later the Zealots were in the same resister role against the Romans; both groups used adherence to Jewish laws and traditions as means to rally the nationalistic forces to resist the new cultures and used religion and as a means to assure cohesion of those in revolt.

The mergers and morpher responses need a bit more explanation. Mergers hoped to find common ground between the old and the new. They did not reject the old (as accepters did) but tried to explain the old to the new and the new to the old as being common and mutually inclusive. The writings of Philo of Alexandria are often cited as the most famous of the attempts at cultural merging in the Jewish history (looking to find common ground with the Classical mind – his writings were later send by Christians as a tool to justify Christianity to both the Jews and the Classicalist.).

The morphers did not attempt to justify the old to the new, but attempt to salvage and protect the old by using the new terms and language of the new dominate group. The primary example of this in all of history is that of Christianity, using much of the new terms of the Greek philosophical world, and transforming it to retell the ancient concepts of Egyptian and Phoenician religions.

A more modern rendition of this morphing is what became know as “Social Darwinism” where the old racist concepts of a white supremacy evolved away

from the language of religion and the Bible as the source of justification for such beliefs, to the use of the new language of science and the ideas of evolution to develop a self justifying case for white domination by the mere fact that whites were dominating.

Following how the people of Judea/Israel and Canaan/Phoenicia responded to the revolutionary wave of Persian and then Classical (Greek/Roman) invasion of the Ba'alist/Yahwehist world is again critical to understanding the effort of this work, and extensive space is provided to show the development of these four groups within these populations.

In addition, as Rome evolved from a small Republic to the great empire, it too was inundated with new ideas and concepts from the newly acquired lands. How Romans also fell into these four groups in response to this influx of ideas is also critical to understanding how Rome became Christian and therefore how Rome in fact became Ba'alist. So again, a great deal of time must be given to tracking the fall of the Roman world and the political crisis that came with the new religious ideas and how the crisis impacted the religions and the religions impacted the crisis.

XV.

It is clear that the group of beliefs that became Christianity was more than just the morphing of Ba'alism. The new religion incorporated much of the beliefs and practices of the ancient world into its new version of the "truth" and of the "good news." And based on the first premise of this work, religions morph and do not die away, we actually see far more of other ancient religions in Christianity than just that of Ba'alism. This is not a new concept and one that has been discussed since the founding of the religion all the way through to modern times. I am by far not the first to point out or trace the similarities of Christianity to other religions. But for the process of this work, we need to review the origins of rituals to some degree.

For example, the story of the killing of the son of God was not really a new concept; in the ancient world; it was common for gods to die and be reborn more powerful than before, and often after their rebirth to become the judge of mankind. The Egyptian god Osiris is a classic example and much of Christianity is virtually a carbon copy of this god's story.

- Already very old in Egypt, Osiris was identified with nearly every other Egyptian god and was on the way to absorbing them all. He had well over 200 divine names. He was called Lord of Lords, King of Kings, God of Gods. He was the Resurrection and the Life, the Good Shepherd, Eternity and Everlastingness, the god who "made men and women to be born again." ... From first to last, Osiris was to the Egyptians the god-man who suffered, and died, and rose again, and reigned eternally in heaven. They (the Egyptians)

believed that they would inherit eternal life, just as he had done." [See paganizingfaithofyeshua.net/firms.com/no_1_original_saviour_gods_orisis.htm](http://See_paganizingfaithofyeshua.net/firms.com/no_1_original_saviour_gods_orisis.htm)

However, the death of Osiris was not in a form of a sacrifice ... nor that of Mithras or any of the other death and rising gods; this type of god's death and rising was mostly in association with the changing of the seasons and the crop cycles.

Where we do specifically find the need for human sacrifice and this link to Christianity is in the religion of the Canaanites. In Ba'alism, a sacrifice of the son of the leading figure of the area, often the king or the founder of the city or the founding of a new people, or even a new religion, was needed to gain the support of the gods or god of the area. And while, as stated, the idea of human sacrifice was well known and practiced in the ancient world, it seems that it was the Ba'alist who practiced it the most and saw in it the most value.

And even more specifically, while much of the Osiris story is seen in the Christ story, an element seems to be missing and is actually found in the Ba'alist stories. According to very ancient Canaanite texts and traditions, the founder of Byblos, some 8,000 years ago, first called Cronus, then El, was defied, and was therefore a god, and then had an only child by a maiden, and in time of great crisis, this only begotten son was made a king and then sacrificed. Therefore the concept that "god sacrificed his only begotten son (king of the city) in time of crisis to save the world" or the concept that is referred as the New Testament in a nut shell" is one that was present in the region of the foundation of Christianity from some 6000 years (or perhaps only 2000 years) prior to that concept becoming included in the "Pauline" approach to Christianity. We find the story referred to as part of a written document stated to be created some 1200 years before the "time of Christ" and at the time reported to be a very ancient story.

- **Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV.**For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.

XVI.

While much scholarship (some reviewed in this book) has been conducted over the last centuries that shows the historic inaccuracies of the Bible, and the extensive misconceptions of the development of monotheism among the people that came to be called Jews; and in addition much scholarship has been conducted to show the massive similarities of the "Jesus" story with dozen of savior gods from the "Middle East" and other regions of the world; until now there

has been little linkage between the religion of the Canaanites and the Jesus story.

In fact, until now there has been little inquiry into what appeared to be the more unique quality of Jesus as the Lamb of God, the needed Sacrifice to God and that lack of the concept of sacrifice of the other “death and rising gods of the region. Book One of this series spends a great deal of time looking at this possible connection, especially where this linkage is most obvious in the Christian writings to Ba’alist rituals and beliefs, the so called Book of Hebrews.

While this book of the Bible is often called one of the most confusing of all the books in the New Testament, (considering Revelations, that is saying quite a bit), if read in the context that it is being written to a people who were not early “Jewish Christians” as often claimed, but to a people who still were supporters of the now mostly repressed Ba’alist belief system, the book becomes far more clear in its meaning. If we read it as written to a people who were still closely connected to the religious traditions of the pre-Exile period, more Hebrews than Jews, who had traditions and beliefs closely connected to the need for human sacrifice to obtain God’s agreement on the new Covenant the work seems far less confusing.

If we read Hebrews as a promise in a newly morphed form of the new Christianity of the continuation of the old Ba’alist practices, millennia old, and now repressed by Greek, Roman and now Jewish required beliefs, the book of Hebrews becomes one of the best pieces of evidence that a great deal of Christian core beliefs are directly linked to the old beliefs of the Canaanite/Phoenician/Hebrews traditions. We basically read in Hebrews that there is a need for a human sacrifice to seal the deal with God; that is directly Ba’alist belief and for the time Ba’alist alone.

So a good portion of the first book is focused on looking at the Book of Hebrews and looking at it from the view point of its being a morphed version of a Ba’alist revival.

XVII.

And lastly in the first book we need to trace how Christianity came to triumph in the West, at least for a while (before losing more than half the lands they gained). We, therefore, need to trace the final few centuries of the Roman Empire and look at all the political and economic crisis that eventually led to the “withering away of the state” in the West. Again, with the premise being that religious changes come about with political change and decline, Rome fit the pattern well. As the politics of Rome changed and moved every more towards an absolute dictatorship of the Emperors, the Emperors sort to modify religion to reflex their absolutist rule on earth. The concept evolved long before the Christian church came to power of “one Emperor, One God” So as Rome stopped being governed by a group of squabbling senators, with a “heaven” filled with a group

of squabbling gods, and became ruled by an unquestioned absolute monarch, the rulers of Rome moved to reform “heaven” to reflex the concept of “on earth as it is in heaven.”

But again, contrary to the Christian world view of history, the selection of Christianity by the later Roman Emperors was mostly driven by political issues and not divine revelation. In fact we point out that the Emperors actually tried three other major religions for providing a one true god for Rome, prior to settling on the Church of Christ. And again, as proof that the Ba’alist concept of religion was not only alive and functioning despite the defeats of Phoenicia and Carthage, the first choice of a Roman emperor for the “one true god” for Rome, was none other then Ba’al, in that name. The fact that the promoting emperor was short lived was perhaps why Ba’al in that name did not become the religion of the West.

Book One also looks at the other religions (Sol Invictus, Mithras) that were the choices of other emperors, and why these religions failed while Christianity eventually became the official religion of the Empire. In addition, we will explore how once in power, the new official church, based on the writings connected with the fall of the Judean state, and the wrath of god, required forced conformity and destroyed all knowledge that was contrary to their beliefs. It was this new Church that created a reign of terror and was far more responsible for the development of the “Dark Ages” then the influx of invading peoples.

XVIII.

As the author I fully have to acknowledge that much of the true evidence to justify the claims of this book are not available, since much of the evidence was destroyed by the Christians once they came to power. I am left with only the scraps and interpretations of what little we have from the Ancient world that survived the burning of books and so much more by the new Church. The extend of how much knowledge of the past was destroyed by the Christians (not just the library of Alexandria, but all the libraries of the Ancient world) and how they attempted to eliminate any writings or facts or legends or myths that in any way countered their new world view is only thinly understood in the current still predominately Christian West.

We still fail to understand how more than 1,000 years of repression where questioning Christian beliefs was a capital offense, continues to impact our current world and how current world politics play out. Despite the “Age of Reason” and the great advances of the modern world, much of what the Ancients knew and understood continues to be regarded as of little importance by most people today. And for those who are religious, inquiry into the basis for their beliefs is of little importance and for those who are not religious the inquiry into the past often seems fool hearty; to them it’s all myth.

However, I see it differently, in that much of the politics and religious absolutism that evolved out of the conflicts between the contending forces for political and religious supremacy in the time of the rise of Christianity and its morphing of the Ba'alist and other religions continued to play out through the history of the West.

We can see direct links between the demand for "orthodoxy" from the new Church and the requirements of One Emperor, One God, from the new absolutist rulers of Rome who eventually promoted Christianity to political power, and the mega deaths of the later centuries ... either in the Inquisition or later in the Thirty-Years War or in the great wars and revolutions of the 20th century. And in book Two of this series that is what we do --- show how the events of the history of the post Roman Empire world right to the present are directly linked to the transition of absolutist religious beliefs, based in the manifestation of the Christian Churches. We also show how the rituals of Ba'alism morphed into rituals of repression; rather than Christ being the last human sacrifice needed, the Church took the ritual of human sacrifice and changed it into the primary tool for repression of dissent from Church conformity. The result was that over the last 1600 years or so, millions were burned to death in rituals that copy one thing and one thing only – a human sacrifice based in Ba'alism.

XIX

This connection between the ancient practices of Ba'alism incorporated into Christianity, coupled with the great fear of the "wrath of God" found in the later Prophets and the creation of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, created a state of religion tyranny in the West lasting some 1500 years. We argue that this Western tradition of religious terror laid the foundation for the great state terrors of the 20th Century. In the second book of this series we explore the history of terror and death created by the tyranny of the Christian religion and the mega deaths of the last century (actually starting in the Age of Discovery till now.)

We especially can see these links for this use of terror far more clearly once we make the connection to the consequence of the Christians the merging of the Old and New Testaments. The early Church leaders took such a step to fight the criticism that they were a "new religion" (by including the Old Testament they claimed to be an extension of the Ancient Jewish worship). There was, in fact, a great deal of infighting over this step of inclusion and the first "New Testaments" was created as a rival, not a continuation of the Jewish Bible. The Christians who argued against inclusion saw the god of the Old Testament as an even demon and not a god of love, while the god of the New Testament, the god of Love, was a new god and not the same as the Jewish god; they lost the argument, and many their lives over this view.

With this adoption of the Old Testament came the acceptance of the right of the new Church to force conformity on to all people, just like the small and isolated Jewish state of the Second Commonwealth required forced conversion and

adherence. With the Church becoming the Universal church through partnership with the Roman State (emperors) the right of the Church to force conformity to fall-stall the wrath of God was no longer a question of a small isolated state forcing conformity on a few thousand people.

We now see, once in power, the Church claiming the right to force conformity on millions; the resistance to the new religion resulted in unstable governments, extensive executions (over 300,000 in some fifty years) and the abandonment of the state; many “Romans” preferred to try and make deals with the Germans then live under the tyranny of the new Universal Church. There were revolts as late as 400 AD in Rome where they were trying to put a non-Christian Emperor on the throne in the West, with the promise of complete religious freedom to all people. The effort was crushed by the Eastern Catholic emperor.

We see the same sequence later when the Arabs appear with Islam, and much of the Eastern Empire accepted Arab rule with the promise of religious freedom. A few thousand Arab fighters were able to take all of “Middle East” and North Africa from the Eastern Empire with massive popular support, since the Christians in those lands were in dispute with the “Catholic Church” over some fine points of worship, and for decades had been in religious civil wars with the capital of the Empire. This time the Emperor could not crush his rivals and close to half of the Christian lands were lost --- until this time.

- There is by far a stronger argument that Christianity, and its efforts at forced conformity, destroyed the Roman Empire rather than the Christian view that they saved it.

XX

We see the church revival with the discovery of new lands; with the spread Christianity around the world, the Church saw its obligation to force conformity onto all people or face destruction from the wrath of God. The Church was not just concerned with the saving of souls of the newly “discovered peoples”, but the saving of all culture; forced conformity was needed among all peoples, based on the writings of the Old Testament, or else God would destroy all things again.

However, before the age of discovery, in the backwater of history that was Europe at the time of the ending of the Roman state, eventually over time, new states were redeveloped. These new leaders of these states (monarchs), much like the later Emperors of Rome wished no resistance to their rule. They too adopted Christianity with its concept of one god one ruler, and allowed the Church to institute forces to ensure conformity (as long as the Church supported the absolute rule of the monarch – on earth as it is in heaven).

Much of the second book looks at the road of the recovery of the Church in the West and from the Auto de Fe of Spain and the Spanish Empire to the gas chambers of Germany and Stalin death camps and the cultural revolution of

China and the killing fields of Cambodia and how the modern states took on the right to force conformity for its own purposes..

We look at why the preferred form of execution in the West, especially in Spain and in areas once dominated by the Celts for these capital punishments for non-conformity was burning people alive. We ask the critical question of why -

- In 1500 BCE or so (up until about 150 BCE), every so often in what is now called Spain, there was a big public ceremony and celebration that ended with the burning of someone alive to placate the needs of a god, and then
- In 1500 CE (actually starting about 1200 CE to about 1870 CE) every so often in Spain, there was a big public ceremony and celebration that ended with the burning of someone alive to placate the needs of a god,

We need to also ask why throughout what was at one point Celtic Europe (and the Celts were allies and greatly influenced by Punic culture) over the course of at least 700 years, 100,000's if not millions of people were burned alive as part of a public ritual designed to ward off evil and protect the community from non-conformity.

We argue that these acts of public burnings were more than a “social echo” of a very ancient culture, but a direct continuation, morphed by the Church, of the religious rituals that had dominated these areas for thousands of years; the rituals of Ba'alism.

We know that much of the model for the devil was created by the Church based on Ba'al and much of the model for hell is based on the rituals of burning people a live based on Ba'al but what we in the modern world do not know is that much of the concepts of social repression and the main tool used for social repression is also an adaptation – a morphing of the critical core ritual of Ba'alism, human sacrifice.

And not only was the retelling of the Christ story a retelling of the Ba'al story, and that the actual death of Christ is a retelling of the critical Ba'alist ritual of the need for the sacrifice of the first born in time of extensive danger, but the West morphed the actual ritual of human sacrifice into a continuation of human sacrifice in the same fashion as the Ba'alist rituals, through the Auto de Fe and witch burnings.

XXI

And we can continue to see an echo of Ba'alism in the tragedies of the 20th century, not only in the transference of the right of conformity from the Church to the state but in far subtler forms.

For example, the very term holocaust, the term used for the mega death of Jews in World War II was a word chosen by Christians not Jews; the Jewish term for

the event was Shoah which means “catastrophe.” The terms the Christians use, comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word referring to the highest form of sacrifice, one so sacred that none but god could participate in its consumption. The term is thought to refer to the human sacrifices offered to God in the older form of the Ancient Jewish religion, or the sacrificed the reflected the root of that religion in Ba'alism.

The Jewish groups initially strongly rejected the term since in Jewish writing, it implied that the Jews who were burned in the ovens (only after being killed by gas, or multiple other forms of executions) were somehow a sacrifice to god. We point out in the second book, that this concept is and was and continues to be appalling to Jewish thought, but completely in line with Christian and Ba'alist traditions; the sacrifice, the “holocaust” was needed by god.

The findings of both these books are that the modern religion of the Western world is perhaps better described as Christian Ba'alist tradition rather than a Judeo-Christian tradition. That the religion most hated by Yahweh actually is the religion, in its morphed form, that dominates the Western world today. Ba'al is Jesus, Jesus is Ba'al and the human sacrifice, the holocaust is accepted as needed by this God of the Christians.

I hope all who read this effort approach it with an open mind and is willing to look at what historic facts available and not just the sacred books of a given religion.

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A Power Point Version of the Executive Summary

A Blog and Feedback section

The Ba'al Theory of Christianity

Introductory Essays

Introductory Essay 1

Why We Really Know So Little of The Past

Since the primary focus of this work is what appears to be a major rite of the Phoenicians, that being child sacrifice, many will assume that the people who performed these acts were barbaric and cruel peoples. However, what we shall see is that this act which creates such horror to the modern mind, were in fact performed by what was seen at the time as the most advanced and civilized peoples. We in the present have little understanding of the mind set of those in the past.

What is also mostly true is that we, in the present, have little understanding of the frame of reference of the writers of the past. Even when we translate (and we are learning to translate better all the time) and actually gain the right words, we will often not really understand the right intention or allusions of the Ancient writers. We naturally interpret words with our own self understandings of events to come; obviously the writers of the time did not have such knowledge. We need to try to put aside our modern morals on terms and issues, such as one of the focuses of this book, child sacrifice and its role in religious development. Our contemporary "understandings" often justify our current views and religious beliefs, but do not necessarily help us understand the views and religious beliefs of the persons who actually wrote the ideas, at the time they wrote them.

- We are therefore prejudiced in our reading of the past and defensive in trying to understand the beliefs of the past.

In addition, we often do not understand the nature of time, and the length of time, involved in the development of concepts, ideas and even events of the past.

- An example of what I am trying to say here is that it appears that most of the "prophesies" of the Old and New Testament were written after the events actually took place. So, for example, if we find in the Old Testament a prophecy stating that the Assyrians would not take Jerusalem, and they did not take the city, we must now understand that the "author" of this prophecy, or the words of the prophet, were recorded after the event, not before the event.

The same is true with the New Testament. For instance, Jesus' description of the "second" temple being destroyed, supposedly given some forty years before the event, appears to be a highly accurate description of the events as they did occur when the Romans destroyed the temple. This is used by many modern Christians to show the power of Jesus to predict the future. However, all non-religious scholars absolutely agree that the earliest the Gospels were written was

some 10 -50 years after the Roman victory. Therefore, as the old saying goes, hind sight is 20-20; having an accurate description of the event as prophesized by Jesus, does not show great foresight, just good descriptive writing.

That event, the destruction of the temple, was so critical to the history of the region's peoples, for both the Jews and the early Christians, that the writers of the time would undoubtedly feel compelled to say something about it. This event was probably seen by the people of the time as a traumatic event on a much greater scale than 9/11 was for us. This might seem like an overstatement but is certainly not for reasons we will discuss. A prediction about this catastrophe would seem not only logical for writers trying to portray Jesus as the son of God, but almost necessary. Its appearance in the Bible is not "proof" or "evidence" of anything, other than the certainty of its importance for the people of the time.

This lack of proof and evidence of our real history is based in part on the realities of politics. In large part our lack of understanding of the past is the result of deliberate policies of rulers and religions to eliminate concepts that challenge their concepts. The destruction of counter narratives has been extensive and greatly clouds our understanding of history.

Sadly, throughout much of human history, freedom of thought has been a rare commodity, and the freedom to dissent even rarer. For at least the last 1500 years, dissent, especially religious dissent was a capital offense. The "religious police" that we hear about in Taliban-dominated Afghanistan, beating and killing those who violate the slightest dictate of their interpretation of Islamic law may seem barbaric to us now but such behavior was the norm throughout Western history. Since the advent of Christian domination it was certainly the rule, rather than the exception.

- Most historians see the modern world as a development of the Western powers, rather than a product of the chaos that resulted from the demise of the Classical world. In relatively modern times, say from 400 AD on, the Christian West was among history's worst in its repression of ideas and demands for religious conformity. For almost 1,000 years, the Christian church did all that it could to prevent the use of any knowledge other than their "Bible". Not being "a believer" was a capital offense and instruments of enforcement were readily used (the Inquisition being the most famous but, by far, not the only of these tools)

There was a conscious effort by the Christian church to dominate thought and information. Once in power (mostly after 400 AD or so) they did everything they could to destroy the knowledge of the past, especially the thought of the Greek and Roman intellectual world, even while some of the elite in the Church still studied and used the classics amongst themselves. For the most part, the Church tried to destroy all scientific evidence that suggested that the origin of the world was anything different than that which appeared in the Bible. The only allowable discussions concerning the origin of the universe and man were limited to such debates as where Noah landed or how the sin of Adam impacted all of us (or how many angels could dance on the head of a pin).

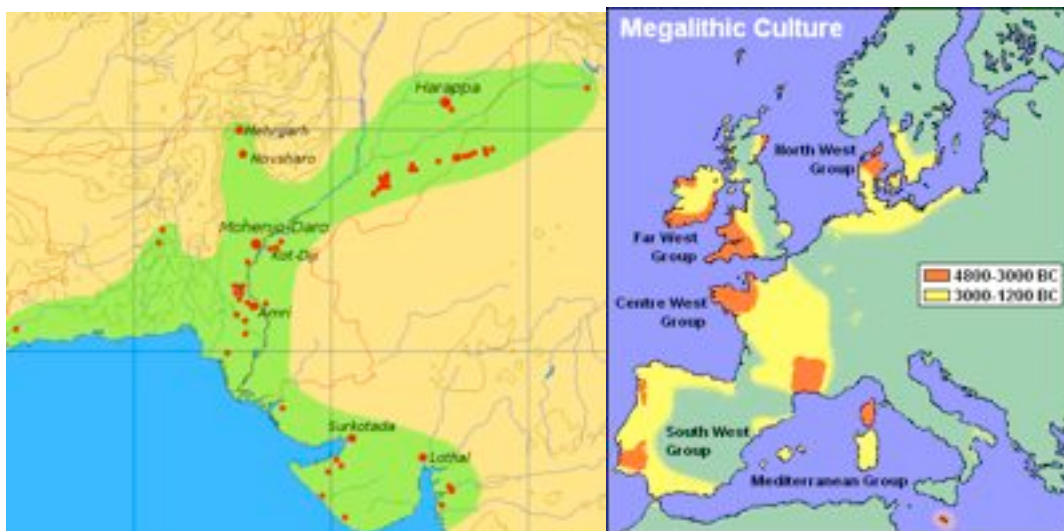
For nearly 1,000 years in the West, all discussions of justice or freedom had to be framed within the narrow confines allowed with the Bible (or at least how the Church allowed the Bible to be discussed). Almost all art had to reflect the themes of the Bible, with a few narrow reflections on some classical writings, and almost all writings had to be approved by the Church. To do otherwise was to toy with death or torture, or at the very least, to forgo payment from a local church or nobleman.

What writings do remain from the pre-Christian past, or should I say, survived the Christian efforts to control them, often make us realize that we are only now starting to “catch up” to the common knowledge of the ancient world. For example, in Herodotus' histories of the Persian-Greek wars, he listed twelve “Ionian” cities that revolted against Persian rule. For many centuries the locations of most of these cities were lost and it wasn't until present times, using modern approaches, that these ancient cities have been “rediscovered”

We can see that we actually have very little understanding of the extent of culture prior to the Christian world, and even how successful these cultures were.

- Starting in the 1850's we have evidence of ancient cities in the Indus River valley, which were actually unearthed in the 1920's (Mohenjodaro and Harappa). No one knew anything about them and they are still relatively unknown by Westerners today. Yet, they were perhaps four times the size of the Sumerian cities of about the same time and with populations of over 40,000, they were more advanced in design and sanitation than anything that would appear in Europe for three thousand years. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization

We still know almost nothing about the peoples of these cities, or their history of beliefs. Also, all across the world is evidence of a major “megalith” culture that seems to have flourished starting about 6500 years ago that we can only guess as to what they knew or believed (Stonehenge, and the Malta structures are the most famous of these remains, but by far not the only ones.) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megalith>



Much of the basis, the knowledge, of what I need to talk about is so limited. Recent findings as well as discoveries that have been around for quite some time are still widely debated within the scholarly as well as the religious communities. I can only try to tell you, the reader, what appears to be “agreement” and “facts.” But much of it is based on so little data; never mind that so much of the interpretation of these facts is clouded by issues of “belief”. The scholars will say they can support their findings, but each year it seems we are finding new things that force a rethinking. Therefore, my task of helping us have a common basis of knowledge is very hard.

So, for example, in response to the question of who wrote the Bible, we can get statements that range from:

- God did, and that is that. “The Bible is the divine word of God.” To,
- Great evaluations that show that the Bible was in transition and developed over 1,000 plus years, and that the “Old Testament” may not have been consolidated much more than 100 years or so prior to the writing of the “New Testament”.

Of course, there are those who will fight vigorously for their views on the origins of the Bible with absolute “belief” in their stance, and there are others who argue emphatically that their research supports this fact or that. What is a poor presenter to do?

The modern American media is filled with “tele-evangelists” mostly supporting the first view. Indeed, even television programs which make an effort to provide an “academic” effort (*Mysteries of the Bible*) tend to be wholly based upon the concept that the Bible is at least mostly true, though perhaps not completely understood.

The culture of America is still dominated by religious theory pretending to be fact. When texts were discovered and translated in the 1920’s and 30’s which gave new insight into the religion of the “Canaanite” or Phoenician peoples, there was little popular discussion of the findings. In part, perhaps because there is extensive evidence from these texts to strongly suggest that much of Hebrew/Jewish religious culture was not uniquely inspired by God, or divine in any way. Rather, the evidence suggests that ideas and practices are “borrowed” or “morphed” (a term I will use a great deal in this book) from the Phoenicians. In these writings found in Phoenicia, we find similar stories that are found in the Bible, also similar rituals and festivals, including one almost completely similar to the Passover ceremonies, and psalms, that are almost word for word the same as ones in the Old Testament. Here we find new possible origins for the Bible, something the “Christian establishment” really did not want distributed too far. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit>

Therefore, the translations of the texts have been slow in coming. They have also been, with the exception of some very good academics, mostly ignored by the public (or at least by the mass media that presents things to the public). So giving reference to them in writing here is once again problematic.

At this little point I need to more fully explain what must seem obvious already; this book, while about religion, is definitely not written from a “religious” or “sacred” point of view. This book is trying to show how religious beliefs, over time (a great deal of time), have actually changed little, and more or less “morphed” into other “manifestations” or “religions.” In fact, many of the concepts of the Ancients are present in the religions of today. As we will see, there are really few examples of “new religions” over the time of history covered in this book. What became new, was something that caused far more conflicts. It is the “clash of civilizations” that led to the appearance of great changes in the religions of the known world at the time. These concepts of “morphing” and “limited changes” will be better explained in other sections of the book.

“Time” needs to also be explained or discussed, or at least how issues of “time” cloud our understanding of the past. We are truly covering a lot of “time,” a very long period of history in this book. And “when” in time, things are said and done, and the sequence in the “time” of certain events is very important to telling this story. However, “time” is greatly misunderstood by the modern reader and thinker.

Let's look at time from the point of view of the “fundamentalist Christians” who until recently, saw the creation as an event taking place some 6,000 years ago (4004 BC) and for the sake of illustration let's give that length of time a distance of a foot. The best estimate science can give us for the beginning of the earth in terms of time is actually some six billion years. The difference, then, between these two estimates is roughly some 19,000 miles, and the distance between the rise of humanoids some 2 miles. Even if we just look at the rise of modern humans, some 100,000 years ago, we still have roughly a 17 times difference in distance between the Christian view of creation, and the scientific view of when the first human Adam developed.. In addition:

- Our views of time, of history, have been greatly distorted by, religion, popular imagery and folk history. In the last hundred years, Hollywood and television, our new myth perpetuation machinery, has greatly added to our popular misconceptions

One of my favorite misrepresentations is in the production of the “*Ten Commandments*,” with Charlton Heston as Moses. The film, for dramatic effect, takes great license with so much of the story. One of the most interesting deviations is where, upon returning to the camp of the Hebrews, Moses finds them worshiping the Golden Calf, and destroys the wrong doers by throwing the newly provided Ten Commandment tablets into the crowd of “sinners” with the effect of a rocket blowing up and splitting the earth.

Nice effect, but in the Exodus 32, it states that Moses broke the tables alright, but with no dramatic impact. He had to send people into the camp to kill the wrong doers, and 3,000 were slaughtered. ... (right after being told “thou shall not kill)

Exodus 32

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strowed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. ...

26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

Not a nice image for the movie goers; but if you ask the average person in the US, how God took revenge for the Golden Calf, if they know anything, chances are it's the movie image that prevails.

This example is only one of thousands included in movies that distort our view of history, Often the distortion becomes the "accepted version." For example, movies have often showed very early Christians using the sign of the cross while it was a "fish" that was the sign of their early faith. Two thousand years ago, it was, indeed, the dawning of a new age ("This is the dawning of the age of Pieces, the age of Pieces ..."). The cross motif was adopted several centuries later. Movies, when searching for pious mood music, often have the early Christians singing hymns written 1,500 years later.

The film industry has also often collapsed time and events to make them fit into the required blockbuster storyboard. In addition, radical changes are made to fit their needs or whims. In two movies of some fame, "*Fall of the Roman Empire*", and its remake, "*Gladiator*", the Roman Emperor Commodus is depicted as ruling for a relatively short time. In reality, he ruled for a period of eighteen years, ruling as a despot, with great slaughter of those who had supported his father, Marcus Aurelius. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commodus>

Why talk here about something so well understood (movies messing with history)? It's just to show, slightly, how distorted peoples' view of history is, in general and how the "forces that be" often change our view of history. In our current world, it is obviously the Christian church that has had, and in some ways continues to have, the strongest negative influence in understanding history. The Church, once in power, made belief in the Bible, and the Bible's history the only legitimate sources for the analysis and discussion of history. This was the stated and enforced political reality for some 1,400 years - a very long time, indeed. To question the Church and its views of history, during this time period, was a capital offense.

Therefore, the stories of the Bible concerning creation, Noah, Abraham, David, etc., all were to be considered “literal facts”. So, throughout this time period, all people in the West were mandated to believe that the world was created some 5,000 years before their time, and that the Flood had occurred, and that all political events, and mass die offs such as the Great Plague, were in fact ,“God’s” doing.

The breaking of this stranglehold on “thought” and “study” has occurred only recently - some 350 years, really a short time period. We have only recently reached the point that “legitimate” studies and writings of history can be completed, and dispersed. It is really only in the past 150 years (an even very shorter time) that legitimate competition on history has been “allowed” and a more “true” history of the world has come to be better understood. The mere fact that almost every child (in the West at least) knows about dinosaurs and the Jurassic era is actually a revolution in freedom of understanding, and a liberation of thought almost unprecedented in the history of the world. The Church can no longer impose its view of the history of the world when competing with Steven Spielberg.

However, the traditionalist Christian view of history is not going away without a fight. With the increase in religion fundamentalism, and with ongoing fight over such issues as “creationism” and other efforts to preserve the stories of the Bible as “fact” the struggle to free “history” from religious influence is on-going, and not nearly a “done deal.” Yes, there are still many who think that Adam and Eve road a dinosaur to church on Sundays.

If history teaches us anything, it is that freedom, especially freedom to think, is an ephemeral thing. I write this effort during one of the rare times in history when people are free to think and explore (at least where I live), and have the access to the documents needed to think and explore. I hope that time will treat this freedom, and my taking advantage of this freedom, kindly.

Introductory Essay 2

Obviously, I Am Not “In the Beginning”, But I Do Have A Beginning

I have worked on, and thought about the concepts I am trying to outline in this book, for quite a while. History has always been my great love, and the study of “non-traditional” history has fascinated me, long before it seemed popular with others. For example, in my teens and early twenties, I spent years looking at the likelihood of “pre-Columbian contact” and also loved both the concepts of Immanuel Velikovsky presented in “Worlds in Collision” and “Ages in Chaos.” Not that I accepted Velikovsky’s “absolutism” (that the planet Venus was a comet that came off of Jupiter and almost destroyed Earth) but I loved the challenge he presented to the, then, stagnant field of research.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel_Velikovsky.

Even before these “youthful” explorations of history I had known, or rather at least heard about Ba’alim, from attending religion training. There I had heard of the tales of its great evil and that it was hated by God. However, I paid little attention to “what” was so hated, and soon concentrated my personal Biblical readings (what little I did) to Kings and Chronicles (the history), rather than to stories of rituals and of religious concepts per say. Even there in the books I read, I found that the conflict between God and Ba’al seemed to be that the kings of Israel and Judah were following Ba’al more than Yahweh, and the key issue for God was only “I am a jealous God.”

However, the more I changed my way of looking at history the more I was challenged by unexpected issues. For example, in the pre-Columbian contact theory, there were arguments raised that modern historians got their time tables wrong based on a first century misreading of Egyptian dynasties (another theory of Velikovsky)

Based on this exploration I began to consider the question of what it was that was so hateful about Ba'al in the eyes of God, other than just God’s “ego.” I began to see that it was also an issue of “rituals” and “beliefs” that was the main problem for God.

- There is a constant insistence in the Bible (both from God and the prophets) that the people of Israel do not go “whoring” after the foreign gods and that the people of Yahweh do not need to have their children “pass through the fire” in order to please God. These issues seem to be that which separated the practices and rites of the god of the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews and the peoples already in the Promised Land.

Yet, (at least in the Bible story line) for hundreds of years, if not more, the “chosen people” chose not to obey these commands concerning the rituals of other gods. Despite repeated warnings, and political and other disasters, (again based on the Bible stories) the people of Israel and Judea ignored the direct words of God, and the prophets, and did go “whoring” after the foreign gods and

also did, in fact, pass “their children through the fire.” They continued to perform these acts:

- even after the incident at Mt Sinai (where three thousand were murdered for worshipping the Golden Calf, literally moments after being told by God “thou shall not kill”)
- even after the purging of the non-believers though forty years of wandering,
- even after failures in the conquests of Canaan,
- even after defeats from the newly arrived enemies, the Philistines,
- even after the defeat and death of Saul, and the repudiation of David by God,
- even after the separation into the two weakened kingdoms and the death of many kings “who did evil unto the lord” and
- even after the destruction of the Northern kingdom as a punishment from God, and the efforts to reform the Southern kingdom,

According to the Biblical timeline, some 800 years after God spoke to Moses at Mt Sinai, as the Babylonians are besieging Jerusalem, these people were still “passing their children through the fire,” or in other words, offering them up as human sacrifice. I say “these people” because as we shall see, “the Jews” is not quite the right term for them yet. The more correct term at this time is the Judeans.

- It's also important to remind readers that there is little independent evidence to support the Exodus and the Hebrew conquest stories.

With all this in mind, we must ask what was so powerful about these Ba’alist practices that they had such a hold on the hearts and minds of the Israelites and Judeans? What does it tell us, that despite endless warnings and actual destruction, these rituals were maintained?

It occurred to me that the whole story of the relationship between the God of the “Jews” and Ba’al was not being clearly presented by the current “standard” presentation of history which, of course, is much influenced by the Bible. However, back in my younger years, say back in the early 1960’s, there was not much available to really look at the Ba’al religion, in the West that wasn’t extensively biased. It’s not that there hadn’t been much writing from an anti-religious point of view, it was just that the writings were simply not widely available.

The religion of Ba’al kept coming to my attention as I “matured” as a historian and I started to study the “Punic Wars”, (rooting for the losing side) as Ba’al was the chief god of Carthage. I also found the issue coming up as I studied the history of the Greek/Persian conflicts, as Phoenicia was a key “ally” of the Persians. This Greek/Persian conflict will play heavy in this work as it created the clash of cultures that impacted the development of many religions, but more on that later.

- For a somewhat different view of that Greek/Persian conflict and of what was called the Axial Age, see Gore Vidal's *Creation*)

Again, in standard readings on the Punic conflicts, the religion and practices of Carthage was presented by the “winners” and, as the case with most winners, in not too sympathetic a fashion. While I questioned the two presentations (the Bible's and the Roman's) about the religion and the culture of those who worshiped using the rituals of Ba'alism, there was little readily available to provide me with contrary opinions.

Over the years, my thinking and my reading wandered into many areas, (mainly Chinese, Turkic and Mongol history) not often returning to the arena of the great rival of Yahweh. With my growing atheism and my rejection of the concepts of religious in general, there was certainly less to give me cause to directly reconnect to the study of the religion of Ba'al.

- To me, throughout this time, Ba'alism was just one of many alternatives of what appeared to me to be the same type of religion that dominated the “Near Eastern” (obviously a current Western term- sorry for its use) world, and actually seemed a minor replica of the far more important religions of Egypt and Sumer (and its successor states “between the two rivers”.) Ba'alism seemed to me, to be as it was presented in standard history, a minor side event of world history.

However, I was eventually introduced to a more neutral view of the “rituals” of Ba'alism in reading Flaubert's *Salammbô*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustave_Flaubert_Salammbô http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salammb%C3%B4_%28novel%29 . In his story of Carthage's fight for survival after the first Punic War, Flaubert presented the core of Ba'alistic ritual without passion or “modern” morals. He presented the “passing through the fire,” the process of human sacrifice, as a major and important fact of the “high” culture of the “protagonist” of the story ...

- So in his book, Flaubert had the “good guys” burning their children alive, and this act of “sacrifice” was presented as both “needed” and “good.”

To me, it was an insight into what was always presented in my formal and informal study of history, as perhaps the worst of the worse in human activities. God most hated the Ba'alist, the act of human sacrifice – the passing through fire,” and yet here it was seen as something that was perhaps “standard;” and also something that was accepted in the most advanced of cultures for hundreds, if not thousands of years.

This was truly a “novel” concept, and its presentation in the novel was powerful (though perhaps not historically fully accurate). It helped to make something clear to me about my previous “simple” reading of the Bible - this action, this type of sacrifice, was what God was really angry most about - the passing through fire, the offering of burnt children to appease God.

The conflict over this type of sacrifice was perhaps the core conflict in all of the Old Testament and perhaps, as I thought about it more, a key to understanding many of the rituals and acts in not just Judaism, but in the New Testament as well.

- In the Bible, God and the prophets, for hundreds of years rejected the ritual of this Ba'alistic religion, this "passing through fire", and condemned the Jews (again, not the right term yet) for using it. But use it they, the Israelites and Judeans, did. Furthermore, they continued to use it for centuries, right along with their chief rivals and powerful neighbors (the Canaanites/the Phoenicians).
- God made it a capital offense to go "whoring after these gods" and "to pass the children through fire," but throughout the Old Testament, kings, heroes and commoners alike, continued to do so.

What I realized was that for all these many, many years, those who did these offerings of passing the children through the fire, did not see themselves as "doing evil unto the lord" but saw themselves as the "good guys," doing what was needed and right to appease their gods, and meet the needs of their religious view of the world. And even though in the modern mind "correlation is not causation," to the people of the time, it must have seemed that sacrificing their children to their gods was just, and correct, because it was those who sacrificed their children who seem to be most successful.

- In their own time, not looking backwards as we do now, but in their own time, people only needed to look at the great success and wealth of Phoenicia and compare it to the lack of success of Yahwehists to fully occupy the "promised land" or even control two remote, little kingdoms.

In retrospect, we do see how successful the Phoenicians were and (without religious bias) how unsuccessful the "Hebrew" states were. The Phoenicians seemed to "open the West" and control the trade of the Western world, and of so many nations. You might say they were the world trade center of their time. Furthermore, they flourished for what appears to be thousands of years. They planted colonies throughout the "new world" of their time, the Mediterranean Basin, with great success (Carthage only being the most successful of these). Truly, in the eyes of the people of the time, the Gods of the Phoenicians accepted their type of sacrifice (the passing through fire) and in return, blessed and sustained them, providing them with dazzling success in numerous endeavors.

The Hebrews/Israelites/Jews however, achieved little success. The great achievement presented in the Bible (the Davidic Kingdom) if real at all, was an ephemeral event, quickly falling apart after two generations. Most of the time (and this was a long time), the Chosen people were subjected to "evil rulers" and external conflicts, with many more defeats than victories.

- On the face of it, in their own time, the gods of the Phoenicians seemed to have been more successful in protecting and enriching their people than the God of Israel.

Even at the time of the fall of Judea to the Babylonians after a relatively short siege of a few months, the Phoenicians withstood thirteen years of Babylonian efforts to take their major city (Tyre) and after all that time, the Babylonians failed to breach the defenses of the city.

- Which god(s) seemed to protect their people best? The one who rejected human sacrifice or the one that accepted it? To the minds of most of the people at the time “correlation was causation.” At the same time, the people of Yahweh were being led into exile (again), the Ba’alist rituals seemed to work in protecting Phoenicia. To an impartial Ancient, it must have appeared that these rituals were also helping the Phoenician world, expand through Carthage and its other colonies.

As I was beginning to look at these religious conflict issues in this new way, my curiosity wandered to other things (mainly my career in public service and the history of persons with disabilities to name a few things). I did not follow up on the images and concepts presented in *Salammbô*. Even in my studies of history, I was looking at too many other aspects of “war and peace” and less at changes in religion.

- However, the idea that “good guys” could perform” human sacrifice remained with me as a compelling concept.

Two different pieces of comic art, seemingly unconnected to Ba’al, pulled me back to looking at this religion again. The first was Mel Brooks’ “History of the World Part I” with its amazing scene of turning the torture chambers of the Spanish Inquisition http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Inquisition into a musical routine that was a tribute to Esther Williams and Busby Berkley. (In the scene, Brooks has the unbelievably funny line, at least for a historian, of “Torquemada, Torquemada, Oy, you can’t Torquemada anything”). The other work was Leonard Bernstein’s adaptation of “*Candide*” into a musical. He had the equally amazing song in his play of “*Oh what a day for an Auto de Fe*” mocking rituals used in the lead up to the burning of heretics.

These two comic efforts to remind the world of the horrendous repression of human rights (sorry for using a modern term again) and enforced social conformity, led me to explore the use of terror in the Catholic Church (not an easy subject). It also led me to think about why the Church in Spain used the method of burning at the stake in such large numbers (perhaps as high as 30,000 or as low as 3,000) as opposed to just torture and publicly humiliation or other forms of execution. see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auto_de_fe)

- As you can see from the range of the figures, there is great dispute over the actual numbers killed through the work of the Inquisition. For a view of this conflict see both

<http://www.newscholars.com/papers/Killing,%20Christianity,%20and%20Atheism.pdf> and <http://biblia.com/christianity/spanish.htm>.)

I asked why was this particular form of execution (burning alive) was so favored in this area of the world, when it was far less used in the “East.”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Execution_by_burning While looking at Spain, and its use of burning, the trail of investigation led to other massive efforts of repression in Western history, namely, the Church's imperative of social and religious conformity, and the repression of women through the use of “witchcraft” accusations. Here I found that once again, burning was not only used, but was also the preferred form of capital punishment (with hanging or drowning as the other main options). Once again, the numbers of how many were killed by burning or other means are in dispute. Over a 250 year period (1450-1700 AD) in Western Europe, the low estimate is that some 12,000 women were killed for witchcraft, with the higher estimates reaching up to 100,000 or more, (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witchcraft> and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witch-hunt>).

I began to postulate the idea that the use of this type of killing, this burning of people, was routed deep in the social past of the societies. The two peoples that had used burning as the main means of human sacrifice were the Celts, who peopled all of Western Europe prior to Roman, and later German domination, and the Carthaginians, along with their “parents,” the Phoenicians. Between these two often closely allied cultures Spain was dominated for almost a millennium. Furthermore, the Phoenicians appear to have been in Western Europe long before the Celts arrived, and seem to be the major influence on the culture and religion of the Celts. I wondered if Celtic traditions such as the “wicker man” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicker_man was also connected to their ancient and forgotten connection to this religion of the Bible, this most hated of all religions of God.

- So I asked myself if Ba'alism was perhaps the “origin” of the means of execution preferred by the Spanish Church, as a practice which lay deep in forgotten (and repressed) social/cultural history of the Iberian region. Was the Auto de Fe, and the burning of persons to appease an angry God, actually Ba'alism in a new and different form, under the guise of a new religion? I also had to ask if the burning of women for witchcraft actually is closely related to the Ba'al religion, too.

From my previous study of culture, I have come to realize that despite all forms of repression, elements of ancient cultures continue to be manifested in the “new cultures.” For the most part we find that cultures actually “morph” rather than die. Here, in the Auto de Fe, and the witch trials of Europe, I thought, I saw a connection, a “morphing” with a long forgotten religion. With my usual curiosity into the uncommon, I began to look, and found far more than I expected.

- A great deal of what I have found was not, and still is not represented in “standard history” and the effort of this work is to at least ask the key questions that may lead to a changing of “standard history.”

- There appears to be a general failure to make reference to the use of human sacrifice in the study of western tradition by what I refer to as “standard history.”

While Velikovsky appears to be was mostly wrong about his concepts of how Venus was created, he did bring about a look at the idea of “*Worlds in Collision*” which led us to greater understandings about how dinosaurs died, and the actual presence of the “Nemesis comet” <http://muller.lbl.gov/pages/lbl-nem.htm> and <http://www.lbl.gov/Science-Articles/Archive/extinctions-nemesis.html> . So perhaps my efforts will not show that there is that major cultural link between the “passing through the fire” and the Auto de Fe, (Bull fighting in Spain is a vestige of Phoenician or Cretan cultures and perhaps even older than the religion of Ba’al). This may only lead to a greater understanding of what was once considered right and proper and the acts of “good men.” It also may just lead us all to a better understanding of the greatness of the Punic peoples and their major contributions of world culture and history. My theory of the influence of Ba’al on the executions favored in Spain may prove to have some merit, though and perhaps others can more fully explore this relationship. I might hope that this point supports the greater overall theory of this work, which is:

- The Religion of Ba’al was not just a minor duplicate of other Near East religions, but was, and still is, a major influence in the overall development of our current concepts (in the West) of both good and evil.
 - It had great influence on the early actual development of Christianity and its views of salvation, and how Christians envisioned the “devil” and “damnation.”
 - The Ba’alist religion and its beliefs and rituals went far beyond the Inquisition of Spain, influencing how the inhabitants of the New World were viewed by the Spanish, and so much more in modern history.

These books present the premise that this very ancient religion, one that is much older than the beginnings of Judaism and thousands of years older than Christianity did not simply go away ... it morphed into our current religious views.

The term “morph” is the shortened form of met·a·mor·phose which means

- To change into a different form, substance, or state: [convert](#), [mutate](#), [transfigure](#), [transform](#), [translate](#), [transmogrify](#), [transmute](#), [transpose](#), [transubstantiate](#).
http://www.uphoenixdegrees.com/index.cfm?key=go_bookkeeping_base&v=google&a=uop_business%2540worldclassstrategy.com&c=accounting&cat=bookkeeping_base&mt=Content&ad=502127334&st=bookkeeping%20definition&pmode=business&est=bookkeeping+definition&emt=exact

We now, thanks to modern understandings, can track how and why Ba’al morphed. Though invisible to academics for centuries, I believe its influence is still all around us.

Introductory Essay 3

The Good, The Bad and The Ba'al

As far as “evil”, the case of the connection to Ba'al is much easier to explain and prove than the case for Ba'al as the good, and it helps to prove the premise that cultures “morph.” For as we will see, the religions of Abraham see the world through the Bible, and in the Bible we see that Ba'al was the chief rival of God.

- In my presentation, we see that this has not changed, since our current view of the chief rival of God, the Devil, is actually still Ba'al. To be more precise, the Christian depiction the Devil is actually a manifestation of Ba'al.

There is historical support for this connection between Ba'al and the Devil, and, although this is a key to understanding the development of the Christian religion, it will not be the major focus of this work. We will need to explore this connection in some detail, however.

- Early [demonologists](#) ... ranked (Ba'al) as the first and principal king in [Hell](#), ruling over the East. According to some authors Baal is a duke, with 66 legions of demons under his command.
- During the English [Puritan](#) period, Baal was either compared to Satan or considered his main lieutenant.. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal>

The case for showing the connection between Ba'al and the mostly Christian view of salvation and “good” is a bit more difficult and will be the major exploration of these works.

Some of the key points that I will try to show include;

- The issue of human sacrifice, so long ineffectively fought against by the “Jewish” prophets and “reformers” is eventually relatively “addressed” through a new “morphing” process, involved in the “Christ Story”

While there has been a great deal recently written showing how the Christ Story follows the hallmarks of many other “savior” and “death and rising gods.” (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life-death-rebirth_deity) I think that the Christian story adds something more than these common factors of superficial similarities.

I believe that the critical differences between Christianity and the “death and rising gods” are written in a number of sources as: the “understanding” of the death of Jesus, his crucifixion, his “sacrifice” as completing the process of the “near sacrifice of Isaac”, or the completion of the “needed” death of “the first born” to meet the needs of the true God, denied to God, by the Hebrews, by the non-sacrifice of Isaac..

The other “mystery cults” of these “death and rising gods” seem mostly to focus on the issues of the need to bring about the new “spring” the coming of rain and the growth of the new crops. In short, they're about food, not eternal salvation.

The death and rising gods are also not seen as “human sacrifices” but as tragic events that are rectified through the resurrection of the god.

- The word Ba'al is also translated as the word, “Lord.” The connection of the Christ story to this need to appease the Lord (or Ba'al) for a sacrifice denied (to make up for the original sin?) to Ba'al, (not as the Devil, but as the “true God”) is mostly unseen in the other death and rising gods story lines: they talk of restoring the Earth with the restoring of the god.

This is the basis of Christianity: that through the death of Jesus (God sacrificing his only begotten son) the needs of the “true God” are met and a new contract between man and God is developed. Furthermore, a new prospect of salvation is delivered by the human sacrifice of Jesus, the first born son, and as the eventual surrogate for Isaac the original contract with God and Abraham is completed and the original sin of Adam and Eve erased. These components are not fully found in the other death and rising stories. However, they are found within the rituals of the Phoenicians, and their religious belief system collectively referred to as “Ba'alism.”

- As we will see, according to the Christians, the religion of Ba'al requires human sacrifice for solidification of a “contract” or “covenant” with God. The difference is that with the Christians, this requirement is completed with the death of Jesus and this death eliminates the need for any other sacrifice of its kind.

We also now know that the basic Christ story, with all its main elements has been around from some 6,000 years prior to Christ (or the time attributed to be the time of Christ). As we will see this concept of God having a son, and in time of crisis declaring him king, and then sacrificing him, is connected to the very foundation of the Western Sky Gods of the Greeks, but has its origins in Phoenicia:

- So Cronus, whom the Phoenicians call Israel, being king of the land and having an only-begotten son called Jeoud (for in the Phoenician tongue Jeoud signifies ‘only begotten’), dressed him in royal robes and sacrificed him upon an altar in a time of war, when the country was in great danger from the enemy.” Frazer’s *Golden Bough* , Chapter 26 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/frazer/gb02600.htm>

Also, other religions and customs are associated with Cronus (besides being the father of Zeus),

- Cronus, visiting the ‘inhabitable world’, bequeathed [Attica](#) to his own daughter [Athena](#), and [Egypt](#) to [Thoth](#) the son of [Misor](#) and inventor of writing. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cronus>
- To El/Cronus is attributed the practice of [circumcision](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanchuniathon>

What I will attempt to present in this arena, this “final human sacrifice” is far more complex than the issues of understanding Ba’al as the “Devil.” While much is written on how and why the death of Christ was not a human sacrifice, I will present the premise, that in part,

- At the time and place Christianity began, believers in the power of the practices of Ba'al were apparently quite numerous. The Christ story is told in a fashion that creates a means to present to this population the idea that the need for sacrifice was ended and that with the death of Christ, God wanted no more human sacrificing, but Christ was that human sacrifice needed to appease El, God or Ba'al.

However, the very act of the death of Christ seems to have been presented as the “ultimate” human sacrifice to those who were still believers in the ritual. At the time of Jesus (given he existed at all), in the place he lived, and among the people he lived with, there is strong evidence (at least from what little we have left) to show that many people still believed in this practice, and in the ancient ways of Ba'al.

As stated before, it will be hard for me to show this connection, and it involves a great deal of understanding of world history that most readers will not have. It also requires readers not to be so tied into their own religious beliefs that exploration of options to interpretation is, well ... not an option. I too had to put away my initial views and understandings. I hope all readers will do so. This is the purpose of study, to challenge your views based on new facts and others understanding of these facts.

With an open mind we can look at history, or at least the stories that pass as history, differently. We can see that in re-reading depictions of Abraham and Isaac, the death of King David's first son with Bathsheba, or the reasons for God's damnation of both Israel and Judah, the religion of Ba'al seems to be central to the issues of each of these stories. Then, we can also understand that despite the defeats of Ba'alists by Persians, Greeks, Romans, and once in power, the Maccabee Jews, the religion of Ba'al did not, as we have presented in standard history, die or fade away, but continued to be a dominant player in the world of the time. We need to appreciate the fact that it was a major rival to the new religion of Christianity.

We do have documented proof that some three hundred and fifty years after the destruction of Carthage, and some one hundred and seventy-five years after the accepted date for the crucifixion of Christ, the Roman emperors were looking for a new religious model for the empire. In these efforts to formulate a “universal” religion, the emperors' first choice for a new paradigm was in fact Ba'alism, not Christianity, which, as it turns out, was the fourth option. Some 125 years before Constantine accepted Christianity (and the extent of his conversion is open to debate), other emperors offered to Rome as the new universal salvation god, Ba'al, and openly required the ritual of human sacrifice to Ba'al, daily offering up children of the Senatorial class. <http://www.roman-empire.net/decline/elagabalus.html>

- As Christianity developed, Ba'alism was not a dead issue connected only to stories of the Old Testament. It was an active and strong rival (the chief rival of God again) for the hearts and minds of the Romans. The core ritual, the offering of human sacrifice, needed to be addressed by the Christians of the time, as they struggled to survive in an increasingly hostile Roman world.

The viewing of Christ as “the last human sacrifice needed” was part of the “morphing” offered by the early Christians to explain why the rituals of sacrifice could and should change. But, this rivalry between Ba'alism and early Christianity clearly shows a strong link between the Church and its developing views and Ba'alism.

Documented history shows that human sacrifice was not a long ago forgotten ritual as the Church was developed; human sacrifice in Rome was being practiced by the Emperor and was a major element to one of the first major rivals of the new religion. The ritual needed to be addressed in a politically acceptable means by the newly rising Christian church.

I have thought and read about this Ba'alist influence on Christianity's point of view for years. Such books as “*The Religion of the Occident*” and the “*The Closing of the Western Mind*” helped me with a new understanding of history of Christianity, and religions in general. However, both books seem to miss the Ba'al importance. Hyam Maccoby's, *The Sacred Executioner* is a book that greatly influences this work. However, Maccoby, while seeing the Jesus sacrifice as part of a ritual of human sacrifice, fails to make the major connection between the “sacrifice of Jesus”, and Ba'alism, directly. In the classic concerning religious development and human sacrifice, “*The Golden Bough*” there is a great deal of insight on the process and ritual of sacrifice, but not the connections I am suggesting. Also, most of the new books that question the existence of Jesus added to this new world view. However, they seem to miss the apparent connection between the ancient rival of God, Ba'al and the new Christian views. So, I prepare to present what I see.

Not only do I now see that the adversary of the God of the Old Testament, is still the chief adversary of God today, only under a different name and mythology, I also think that it might be closer to the truth to say that we live under a Ba'al/Christian tradition in the Western world as opposed to Judaic/Christian one. The main rituals and world views of modern day Christians are more closely related to those of Ba'al than those of Judaism, with the key major issue being the view of human sacrifice, and its role in religion.

Please note that the term Ba'al can be used as

- A particular god (the storm god of the Canaanites)
- A title for any god or ruler or noble (the way Lord is used in English)

- Or a reference to the collective religion of the Canaanites ---
such as Hindu is used to refer to the pantheon of India ...

I will use the term Ba'al or Ba'alism mostly in third manner ... except where specifically pointed out as reference to the storm god.

Introductory Essay 4

How to Write and for Whom to Write?

How to write these books is difficult since I need to try and communicate with those of faith, avoiding offense as much as I can, and those of logic, those who are well educated and also those not so well invested in history. There are several ways to present the information to try to reach all interested, including a highly technical journal approach complete with extensive cites and foot notes (often longer than the text). Another is popular history with more narrative and story telling and less documentation. A third method is to tell the events as a “personal journey of exploration” allowing me license to write extensive thoughts without extensive data to support the book.

None of these approaches are completely satisfying to me. While the later two make the work accessible to most people, the information given is often too unsupported. The first option, a journal type article, makes “hard reading” for most persons. (Of course, there is also the approach of “historical fiction” which I also do not like very much either.)

Therefore, I will attempt to take the best parts of these modern ways to telling history and use them where needed to tell this forgotten story of one of the foundations of modern religions. Where possible, I will give websites to give access to immediate support for arguments put forward and to show the origins of my thinking on this effort to understand how forgotten religions impact our modern religions. I will also use traditional citations when needed as well, but I will avoid foot notes. And, I will also just tell “my personal story” and not have to document that too much.

I will have to speak in “generally accepted” terms rather than actual and “more correct” terms that may make things a bit more confusing. My arguments may be difficult enough. For example, when speaking about Alexander the Great, I will refer to him and his army as representing Greece and Greek culture, which might be only partly true but is mostly popularly “believed.” Alexander, of course, was a Macedonian, a kingdom north of what was considered Greece.

- The Greeks themselves, considered the Macedonians as nearly barbaric (not quite as bad as the Scythians, but pretty close). His father, Philip II had subjugated Greece through war (to the great shame of the Greeks), and one of the first acts that Alexander had to do once claiming the throne of his assassinated father was to put down two Greek efforts to overthrow Macedonian hegemony (if not direct rule). While the first revolt was put down mainly by negotiations, the second revolt occurred the very next year. He responded by obliterating Thebes (Greek Thebes not Thebes of Egypt), something the Persians could or did not even do in the invasion of Greece. Alexander then sold almost all survivors of the city’s sack into slavery (335 BC). The rest of Greeks cities were overwhelmed by this example of “shock and awe.” They quickly begged for peace and accepted the

role of “free allies” of Macedonia. (see.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great)

While it would be more proper to refer to Alexander and his army as Macedonian and the culture he spread as “Hellenistic” I will use the more “popular terms” “Greek Culture “ on somewhat of an equal basis to “Hellenistic culture” (and, proper historians forgive me.) In addition, I will use the archaic BC and AD as opposed to the more correct, but by no means perfect, BCE (before the common era), and CE (common era). Neither of these terms (BC/AD or BCE/CE) are good, and show little respect to Islamic, Jewish, Chinese, Indian, etc, cultures who have an entirely independent point of reference for judging the “year” of events.” But “dating” events is necessary, and I am writing to a mainly “Western” audience, so I will use the most commonly understood point of reference for dating, (and again, proper historians forgive me).

So ... to all – forgive my transgressions (and those who transgress against me)
Or, as Ricky Nelson once sang – yes, I get to quote Ricky Nelson, ...

- It’s alright now, I learned my lesson well.
You can’t please everyone,
So, you got to please yourself.

So I’m writing this to basically please myself. I hope others can be pleased as well.

Introductory Essay 5

Comment on Lack of Information – Fact VS. Myth

My effort, as noted, is not one that is easy, simply because we know so little about our real past ... and what we think we know to be “facts” change frequently as solid research increases and “control of thought” (by religion and culture) dissipates. Even with the new advances in our basic understanding of the past, it is still extremely difficult to write about what we really know so little about.

When we do try to write about religion or more exactly, the religions of peoples in the past, the difficulty is exacerbated by the constant conflict between our current issues of “faith” and “knowledge, and past and current “dogmas” and “fact.” Those who believe in the current modern versions of Christianity or Judaism or Islam, need to maintain a “belief” in history as presented in their holy books. Without the “history, much of their religion tends to fall apart. For example, for many Christian believers “Adam and Eve” and “original sin” are real and therefore must be seen as actual “history”.

- If there was no Adam and Eve and no first rejection of God’s command (by Eve, I.E. the original sin) then there is no need for “salvation”.

This relationship between religion and “history” can be seen in other issues as well, including;

- If there was no Abraham and no Moses, and no contracts between them and God, then there is no foundation for the modern state of Israel.
- And if there was no Jesus, there was no son of God, and there is no foundation for the very existence of Christianity.

There appears to be little to no historical evidence outside of the Bible to support these four events (Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus). Yet, in the West, all four of these personal stories are presented in schools and in religious settings, to some degree or another, as fact.

This teaching, of these people as fact, is very much needed to maintain the very foundations of the modern Western religions. Therefore, we can see that such things as the fight between “creationism” (or “intelligent design”) and evolution, is not simply a fight over “modernism” and “tradition”, it is a fight by the religious to maintain the very foundations of their core beliefs. (Without Adam and Eve, and Original Sin, without Christ, is there a basis for the Christian religion?)

The religious will not go “quiet into that good night.” The forces of the current power (the Christian religion) will fight to maintain a view of history that supports their beliefs and resist new understandings in history that challenge them. Christians are still very powerful in the United States and have great influence on how history is taught and presented in our culture.

Aside from the need of the religious to control history, the time span that needs to be covered makes the task of understanding “history” hard, if not outright impossible. We actually remember (or know) so little. It’s difficult enough to comprehend the 400 years since the settlement of Jamestown (1607) and the incredible development of the North American continent, so how can we be expected to know much about events 4,000 years ago, never mind 40,000 years ago?

- We hardly understand the allusions of people writing during our American Revolution, how can we understand the allusions of peoples writing at the time of the Jewish revolution against the Seleucid Greeks or the first worshipers of a Sky God, rather than the Mother Goddess?

I was at a meeting in Washington DC, working on a project to change the questions used in the US citizenship tests, where a noted “professional historian” stated that he felt that it was better for the new immigrants to the United States to know the “myths of America” as opposed to the real “history.” He felt that the “cultural myths” were the foundations of a society, filled with the good things about the society. He felt that the “actual history” often was made of “real people,” who were all combinations of “good and bad” (like Jefferson and Washington owning slaves). In his view, it was better that the immigrants understood the “intent” of the “founding fathers” or the “outcomes,” rather than the actual history and struggles that led to these outcomes, with all the “human problems” involved.

He wanted the immigrants to become Americans by buying into the “meaning” of America through the “outcomes,” rather than understanding America, through the study of the struggles that got us here. “Outcomes” were projected by the “cultural myths.” He saw in these “cultural myths” stories created as a short hand to explain the key elements of the struggle and the intended meaning of the outcomes.

In some ways, this approach to teaching history is understandable and excusable, and in fact, the way most history has always been taught (the picture of the Twelve Stations of the Cross is a shorthand way of teaching the Christianity and its “outcomes” and about the “folk culture” of Christianity itself). However, the problem arises when the “cultural myths” become accepted, and institutionalized, leaving the real history to be completely, or almost completely, lost. (Also some, like me, argue that the “struggle” and the freedom to have a struggle is the real meaning of America, but that is a different book)

In truth, much of what we think we know as “history” is really “cultural myth” produced and promulgated by the “winning interests” in countless struggles within and between societies. Some of these “cultural myths” grew into “sacred events” confusing matters to even a greater degree. Sometimes, over the course of time, we get very confused on who was real or not. Was there a “real” Romulus, Hercules, Achilles, or even Moses, Jesus, or Paul (or American icons such as Francis Marion, Pretty Boy Floyd, or say ... Zorro)?

- There was recently yet another movie remake of the story of the Battle of the Alamo, which was actually far more accurate than the famous John Wayne version. The movie however “bombed” at the box office, as people did not want to see a Davy Crockett who appeared to be bordering on cowardice and who only acted brave to meet the expectations of others. This was most likely what the real Davy was like, but definitely not the cultural image of the man. The cultural image trumped reality again, and the movie failed.

We need to ask why we currently “believe” in one (or more) of these “cultural myths” and not another? What criteria do we use to justify the acceptance of one of these heroes as “fact” and reject another as “story”, even though there is an equal level of information to prove them both, or, perhaps better said, there is an equal amount of lack of information to actually, one way or the other, not prove them. Are these not issues of the archetype of Jung, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung or the concepts presented by Joseph Campbell http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Campbell ? Perhaps so, and, therefore too much work to consider all of that here. However, all these confront me in my “in the beginning” to write this work. How do you write in a serious fashion, while going against “beliefs” and “facts” of the current time, and still be taken seriously?

In addition, our lack of information is largely based in the deliberate policies of rulers that led to episodes of destruction of cultures and the local “history.” These types of events have been repeated many times throughout history, and are not the exclusive domain of the Greeks or Romans. These actions of invaders, and the remaking of their world in their image, are one of the key reasons we know so little about the past. Conquering powers destroy much of what was in place when they arrive.

- One prime example of this is that Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas. The extensive written (and oral) histories of these peoples were destroyed, their cities made over to the designs of the Spanish, the religions repressed by force, and the peoples enslaved. Of all the written histories of the Mayas (codices) only four escaped destruction and eventually were translated. The few that remain gives us only a glimpse of the greatness of the Maya scientific thinking and their understanding of “time” and the movement of the stars. The Maya, in fact, developed a calendar that is second to none in accuracy. In addition, the few texts that remain show an extensive history of politics and kings. At least these few texts of the Maya remained, despite the effort to destroy them.
- This story of destruction in the Americas (mainly for religious issues) only tangentially connects to the main story line here. So while I’ll return to it later it will only be briefly. For more details on this please see ... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_script and <http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/redalyc/pdf/146/14601901.pdf> -

The Nazi book burnings were also nothing new in world history. We see a prime example of the destruction of “unwanted knowledge” in the obliteration of anything considered heretical by the Catholic Church once it had obtained power in the Roman world. This intolerance inspired frenzied “Christian mobs” to attack the centers of learning of the Classical world (as recently portrayed in the movie *Agora*). For a clear history of this effort please see “*The Closing of the Western Mind*.”

- Only in very recent times have we begun to gain more insight into the diversity of the early Christian churches with the discovery of ancient texts (Dead Sea Scrolls, and others). In addition, several other “gospels” which the Orthodox (both Eastern and what is later the Roman Catholic Orthodox Church) tried to destroy in their entirety.

In reality, these policies of destruction both old and new shape our understanding of history and religion. Our fragmentary overview is based on these policies of repression, since the knowledge of the “Ancients” was lost in the West for almost 1000 years, and only partially recovered today.

We’re all familiar with the concept of the “Renaissance” or how the knowledge of the Ancients, and Classical world re-entered the Western world through contact with the Islamic world, where it had been preserved in both its Greek and Roman original texts, as well as in Arabic translations. However, this “simple” history of revival is mostly not true, and how much we actually got back through the Arabs is greatly over-estimated (when compared to what had been lost forever).

Truthfully, so much was lost and, in fact, can never be recovered. Imagine if we had only four complete plays by Shakespeare, and had only heard of someone named Samuel Johnson or that there was a once a woman writer named Jane Austen. Imagine again, if the works of all other writers for an approximate three hundred year period (from Shakespeare to Austen) were simply gone. That is close to what we have left from the writers of the “classical period” (never mind the lost literature of the Ancients). We have precious few of the plays written over four to five hundred years and which were performed every “season” in Athens or Rome. What we have left are of course, treasured. However, they reflect just a fraction of the acts and opinions of the time.

The rest of the plays were destroyed or simply disappeared. Whether this is all due to the Christians, or perhaps just based on the loss of literacy and the fashion of going to the theater, we can’t be sure. The plays, the science and the medicine, and so much more were all lost and never can be regained. So in actuality, the Arabs preserved very little, not because they did not want to, but because so much was completely destroyed before the coming of the Arab rule.

We generally know of the “Library of Alexandria” where the knowledge of the “Ancients” was collected. We generally do not know that all major cities and towns throughout the Ancient Western World (including communities all the way through India) had libraries and schools and centers where knowledge was openly discussed and debated. The libraries and the debating of ideas were a

major element of Hellenistic culture (and a major source of popular entertainment).

- In the city of Ephesus, in modern Turkey, you can still see the ruins of the library in the core of the ancient city. Clearly written in Latin is an inscription stating that the building was a donation from Julius Caesar.

We also generally know that the Library of Alexandria (Egypt) was burned. There are four major stories on how it was destroyed. The first is that it was an accident and occurred while Caesar was under siege (roughly 47 BC); the second is that Emperor Aurelian sacked the building while suppressing revolts during 270's, another is that the Christians destroyed it during riots in the 391 AD, when they went on rampages trying to destroy anything associated with the old Classical religions; and the fourth is that it was destroyed in the 642 AD by the Arabs who supposedly destroyed all writings other than the Koran. Some say all four events actually happened and the library suffered repeated losses. Others argue that there is only independent confirmation for the Christian attacks in 391, and that it is the most likely source for the major destruction of the classical texts. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_of_Alexandria

However, the repressions of libraries and schools took place everywhere throughout the Roman (and Byzantines) Empire based on the demands of the new power, the Christian Church. The classical world was repressed. The Olympic Games were ended by Imperial Edict, after some 1,200 years of continual uninterrupted events, and that's a long time. After some 900 years of continual discussion and training, the schools of philosophy in Athens (and elsewhere) ended. Then under the later Emperors and the Eastern Empire, the practicing of traditional religious rites became a capital offense.

I have friends, historians who argue that many of the leading church members of the period still loved to read the "classical literature" and made great references to them in some writings, and he argues that there was no great general church repression of the classical world - no organized book burning, per say. However, people and writers I know give different views, believing that there was a strong effort to repress the Classical world. I feel that both views are true. There were some in the Church who maintained a fondness for the past and the writing of the classics, but the main effort of the Church was to present their world, based on the Bible, to the mass of people. (Am I being corrupted in my view by the movie/book "*The Name of the Rose*"?)

However, it seems to be mostly true and mostly agreed to by historians that with the victory of Christianity, all kinds of searching for understanding of the world, of math, science and the "spirit" ended in Europe. A firm belief in the "facts" of the Bible was the only world view allowed, despite some remaining fascination with the writing of the Ancients.

- The loss to human understanding, and history (as well as art, literature, science, medicine, etc) is incomprehensible. It's as if the Taliban ruled the whole world, for hundreds of years and that they did to the West what they did to Afghanistan. This is the closest analogy in the modern world there is

to the coming to power of the Christians in the Roman Empire. (The Nazis and Communists, with all their repression did at least, unlike the Christians, promote scientific research and achievement)

Once in power, starting about 400 AD, under the mandates of the new Universal Church and the new Christian Emperors, all knowledge and world views that were counter to the “Bible” were considered a capital offense. In that later Roman world, and into what became known as the “dark ages,” the pursuit of knowledge, other than efforts to better understand the “Bible,” also became a capital offense.

To be fair, this type of destruction of knowledge is not the domain of the West alone. One of the key examples of this effort to control the present by destroying the knowledge of the past is the “noted” first emperor of China, (most famous for his grave site in Xian with its thousands of clay warriors, and recently, made more recognizable to modern peoples as a character in the new Chinese movie epic “*Hero*”) whose philosophical concept of governance was called “Legalism” (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalism_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalism_(philosophy))). Once he obtained complete dominance over the “Warring States” of China, he ordered the burning of all rival schools of thought, notably Confucian and Taoist texts.

To ensure stability, he (the “first emperor”) outlawed [Confucianism](#) and buried many of its scholars alive, banning the possession of (and burning) all books other than those he decreed (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Qin_Emperor)

Later again in Chinese history with the T’ang Dynasty’s effort to repress Buddhism similar repressions occurred.

- In 845 the emperor Wu-tsung began a major persecution. According to records, 4,600 Buddhist temples and 40,000 shrines were destroyed, and 260,500 monks and nuns were forced to return to lay life.
<http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Buddhism/Buddhism%20in%20China.htm>

We in the United States have been mostly free of this type of oppression (thanks to the First Amendment and dare I say it ... The ACLU), with the noted exception of the treatment of African Americans during slavery and “Jim Crow.” However, we too have experience times when “thought” was deemed “illegal” and persons repressed and even imprisoned for their ideas. In more recent times, the most noted examples of these repressions are:

- the Syndicalism Movement,
 - *Syndicalisme* is a [French](#) word meaning “[trade unionism](#)”. This milder version of syndicalism was overshadowed by revolutionary [anarcho-syndicalism](#) in the early [20th century](#), which was most powerful in [Spain](#), but also appeared in other parts of the world, as in the U.S.-centered [Industrial Workers of the World](#). The federal and state governments repressed the efforts of the IWW or Wobblies, first for the efforts to organize labor into “One Big Union” and later for the opposition to World War I. Hundreds were jailed

- and scores killed in raids. Some (such as Joe Hill) were executed after “trials”. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syndicalism>
- The Resistance Movement to World War I
 - See “Sedition Act” , A section of the Act allowed the [Postmaster General](#) to declare all letters, circulars, newspapers, pamphlets, and other materials that violated the Act to be unmailable. As a result, about 75 newspapers either lost their mailing privileges or were pressured to print nothing more about World War I between June 1917 and May 1918 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Espionage_Act_of_1917 and that 6,000 went to prison during the war based on this act .. see http://www.socialstudieshelp.com/Lesson_73_Notes.htm
 - and the Black Lists developed during the McCarthy era
 - In the [film industry](#), over 300 actors, authors and directors were denied work in the U.S. through the unofficial [Hollywood blacklist](#). Blacklists were at work throughout the entertainment industry, in universities and schools at all levels, in the legal profession, and in many other fields.
 - A port security program initiated by the Coast Guard shortly after the start of the [Korean War](#) required a review of every maritime worker who loaded or worked aboard any American ship, regardless of cargo or destination. As with other loyalty-security reviews of McCarthyism, the identities of any accusers and even the nature of any accusations were typically kept secret from the accused. Nearly 3,000 seamen and longshoremen lost their jobs due to this program alone. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McCarthyism>

All things considered though, the US has come out of a century of massive repression (in Nazi Germany, Franco's Spain, Fascist Italy, Stalinist Russia (never mind Czarist Russia) and Maoist China, just to name a few) relatively with just a few bumps and bruises compared to most of the rest of the world. However, with the rise of the Fundamentalist Christian movement in the US, we face new threats to freedom of thought.

- Again, the general history of repression of thought can be (and in fact is) the focus of many books, and I can not go into much more detail here, but just to say again, we know so little about the past due to the direct policy of rulers to repress “non-conformist” thinking, regardless if that thinking had been the “norm” for centuries or not.

For the purpose of this work, we need to think of the destruction of the knowledge of the Ancients and of the Classicalists, as a key stumbling block to our understanding of the past and our ability to understand the meaning of Ancient and Classical peoples in their own words; who ever destroyed the material matters relatively little now. The fact is that it has been destroyed.

However, we need to look at who is attempting to repress knowledge of the Ancients, and Classicalists today. It still appears that the Christian churches, continue to attempt to stranglehold culture in order to maintain themselves in power, by fighting against massive distribution and explanation of what Ancient and Classical texts we are able to find. So often these texts show major contradiction to the world view of these Christian churches.

Fortunately, with the freedoms of speech and the press, cable TV and the internet, it appears that the Church is fighting a relatively losing battle. With the knowledge available to us today we can really have a “religious free” history. However, history has not been kind to “truth and knowledge.”

Introductory Essay 6

Comment on Religious Impact on Our Views of Historical Characters - or the Battle of the Super Heroes

As an example of this problem of cultural myths and history, and our current views on them, let's take a look at how we view two "culture heroes" of two different cultures; the famous "Greek" from the Iliad, Achilles, and the famous "Jew" from the Bible, King David. (Both "Greek" and "Jew" are terms neither one of them, if they were real at all, would have associated with themselves.)

- These two heroes were relative contemporaries, from the late Bronze Age. The exploits of Achilles are thought to have occurred somewhere around 1100 -1200 BC and David's story dates to about 1000 BC. So there is a relative common time frame involved.
- Both heroes have great and powerful stories written about them in "ancient" literature that have somehow avoided destruction and made it though all the ages to us.
- Both heroes were recognized by their respective cultures for centuries as idealized, but flawed, leaders.
- Both were studied by the leaders of their peoples, as well as by the "masses" of their cultures, to help to define "right actions," or proper conduct. Their tales generally helped shape the "ethos" of multiple generations of Greeks (and those emulating Greeks) and Jews (and later Christians), respectively.

However, the Iliad was vastly more popular for the first 1200 years of its "shelf life" from about 800 BC to 400 AD, give or take a few hundred years. When Homer lived (if at all) is, again, open to debate. However, it is generally agreed by most current historians that the epic poem on the Trojan War first appeared among the Greeks in its current form, about 750 BC or so. It also appears that the oral tradition of Achilles was much older.

Who wrote the Bible, and when it was written, is also a subject of modern controversies, but it also appears that the stories of David were well known among the "Jewish" tribes and in the two "Jewish" kingdoms. They developed into some written form by about 750 BC. Again, the oral traditions of David go back a bit more. As noted, the Achilles story is two or three hundred years older than the "David stories." That said, the two heroes are still in the same relative time frame, and as such can be considered as "cultural hero rivals".

However, in the first 1200 years or so of their "cultural myth rivalry," Achilles had by far the better "press." Achilles was "universally" known, first in the Greek world, and then, later throughout the Roman/Greek world. The Iliad went with Greek culture (Hellenism) where ever it spread. In many ways, the Iliad was used in the spread of Hellenism in the same way as the Bible was used to spread Christianity. Of course the literature of Hellenism was, by no means, limited to one book. At the time of Caesar, the Iliad was read and studied, and Achilles

held up as either the “ideal,” or as the great Anti-Hero. The Romans tended to favor Hector and the Trojans, since one of the foundation stories of Rome was that it was started by the Trojan survivors of the war. This popular interpretation had it that these hearty Trojans spread out all over the known world from the British Isles, to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Reading and studying the life of Achilles, and his life choices, was “mandatory” for any “cultured” person of the time. At first the popularity of the Achilles story was mostly limited to the Greeks , but after Alexander, in 325 BC or so, Achilles was made “universal.”.

For most of these 1200 years of Achilles dominance, David was more of a “backwater” hero, mostly known and admired in the relatively narrow “world” of the “Jews” (again, loosely using that term). Remember that this time period was, for the most part, one of Jewish defeat, exile and rule by rival cultures. Even within the Jewish community, David’s role was not always considered as a highly valued, or exalted person. In the Jewish writing he is portrayed as a flawed person, the seducer of women, the killer of his own son (perhaps even a killer of more than one son). He was portrayed as a flawed man, who had committed so many evil acts that he was denied the right to build the house of the Lord.. He was so evil that at times God condemned him to death (only to have his infant son die in his place – far more on this event later.) .

As Judaism evolved, especially during and after the Babylonian Exile, the toleration of other religions, such as Ba’alim, was seen as grievous error that eventually caused the destruction of the Jewish kingdoms. However, in the stories about David we see that he was clearly tolerant. Therefore, David’s flaws, among Jews of this time, appear to greatly outweigh his good deeds. So even among the Jews, he was not always given the status of what Achilles was given within the Greek world.

The status of both David and Achilles, however, changed greatly with the rise of Christianity and the subsequent repression of Greek (Hellenistic or “classical”) culture by the new power elite (the Christian Church). Starting roughly about 350 AD, the writings of Homer, as well as almost all other “classical” writers were not only repressed, but soon, by 400 AD, the study of these classical writings was limited to only some of the elite Christian church members. As noted, once in power, the new Christian elite did all they could “to eliminate the competition” of their newly won power, and the Church tried to destroy the vestiges of the “Classical world.” As noted; The “Christian Emperors”, in support of their new “universal religion” closed the schools of philosophy throughout the Roman world, and even ended the (1200 year old) Olympic Games.

- The rise of Christianity was the rise of the “dark ages” in the area of thought and also the “fall of Achilles” from his 1200 year reign as the “cultural ideal.”
- The Christians also had a son of god as their hero, and needed to repress this Greek son of a god.

Since within this new Christian world, the Old Testament was among the few pieces of literature allowed to be read (or disseminated to the illiterate by priests),

the rise of Christianity led also to the elevation of King David to a new, “super hero” status for all under the rule of the Christians.

In the arena of an “action hero”, for this new world of repressed literature, David had almost no competitors, being the “top king” in the only book allowed to relay history. And, since the Muslims used the Old Testament as a foundation for their religion, David became a “cultural hero” in the Muslim world as well.

While David did have some local rivals (King Arthur, or Roland, for example) he was the only “universal” hero in the lands where the Bible (and the Koran) dominated the world view. So for the next 1000 years or so, while the stories of Achilles could not be completely repressed, David became the dominant, officially sanctioned “super hero.”

What a sad world it would have been for DC Comics, and the lovers of DC comics, if Batman was the only super hero around. In some ways this is exactly what happened for David. He was the only “action hero” around, and for young men wanting an action hero, he was the only option that could be read and talked about (without threat of death). His kingdom and its importance became overstated (and that’s an understatement), by the readers of the time. In this respect the kingdom of David is very much like the kingdom of Arthur.

Therefore, for most of the next 1000 years (say 500 to 1500 AD or so,) David far out did Achilles, in their “cultural hero” rivalry.

- The Church demanded belief in the Bible as “literal fact.” Therefore, not “believing” in King David, and the “history of his time” as presented in the Bible, was a “sin” and, actually, for most of the 1000 years (and more), a sin punishable by at least ostracism, “spiritual damnation”, and often, torture and death.

The “Renaissance” and “the Age of Reason” brought Achilles back as a competitor for “number one” cultural icon. Even with these revivals of the studies of classical literature the reading of the Iliad and other writings was only “allowed” by the Church as the study of “myths” and ancient stories. They were never to be considered as actual “history.” The Church resisted anything that questioned the Bible and the Iliad showed a different world than that of the Davidic kingdoms.

- Therefore, as early as the 5th century AD, few in the West could question if David was real or not, without dire threat to themselves and their families. The concept of the “historic David” was therefore incorporated as “history” in the West, because it was in the Bible, and the Bible could not be questioned.

Even today, most of the history books used in the schools of these Christian/Muslim areas (and due to the expansion of the Western world through colonialism, modern technology and religious apostatizing), David is presented as an actual historical “being,” while Achilles, if anything, is considered a good story, but a mythical character.

History as taught in the West talks extensively about the kingdoms of David, and Solomon. Modern atlases that show the ancient world, almost always include maps of the Davidic Kingdom based on what is stated in the Bible. Fundamentalist Christians and Jews who support the “Greater Israel” concept base their justification in the Biblical descriptions of the extent of the Davidic kingdom (from the “Euphrates to the Nile”)

Achilles, while revived from the obscurity he “suffered” during the “dark ages,” for most of these 5-700 years (the Renaissance to the present) was relegated to “myth,” if discussed at all. The Iliad was read in literature or “mythology” courses, if read at all.

However, the tale takes a strange twist, as European Imperialism developed. By the 19th century, Achilles stories were read extensively to the “modern young men”, of the middle and upper classes Europe to prepare them for their lives as soldiers. However, he was still seen as a quaint and curious character of the past, by the culture of the time (His story of being the son of a God was stressed as myth, while Jesus being the son of God could still not be questioned). One of these children of the 19th century, Heinrich Schliemann, did grow into adulthood, believing in these stories to be truth, and eventually his efforts led to the finding of Troy. (See <http://library.thinkquest.org/3011/troy.htm>)

Because of this “enthusiastic amateur” what we know now is that there is actually far more archeological and “contemporary other source documents” to support the existence of Achilles, than David.

- Other than the Bible there is no documented source or major archeological evidence to support the contention that there was a King David, and there is extensive documentation of other cultures of the time that make no mention of a great Jewish Kingdom around 1000 BC.

For facts supporting the existence of Achilles, we have Troy itself, with strong evidence to support the historical event of the sacking of the city in the relative time frame of Homer’s epic poem. We also have found the Mycenaean cities throughout Greece, and have strong evidence of their “wars of expansion”. We have extensive articles of art and weapons from the period, which fill museums around the world, showing that much of what was discussed in the Iliad, in Homer’s stories (type of weapons, type of combat, valued objects, religion etc) is clearly supported by material found through archeological efforts. Also, tombs of the time discovered reflect the culture presented in the stories. While the supposed “death mask” of King Agamemnon and “Clytemnestra’s tomb” are real and are dated to the relative time period of Achilles, we can not really prove that these factual findings are connected to the “historic” people that the tourist industry would like us to believe. However, the Lion’s Gate at Mycenae, and the tombs and the mask exist.

We also have extensive records from other cultures, including the Hittites, of their relationships with Troy, and we have these other cultures’ chronicles which record worry about the Mycenaean Greeks, and their warlike intentions. It is still not completely clear, but it is strongly possible that the famous “Sea People”

which almost took Egypt were in fact part of a renegade Mycenaean Greek group. It is also possible that the Mycenaean Greeks were destroyed by the “Sea People,” as well. http://www.phoenician.org/sea_peoples.htm

While there is no direct evidence that there was an Achilles, such as a tomb with his name, etc, there is extensive evidence that the events that are written about may have occurred in a very similar fashion to what is represented in the writings. Clearly something happened there, at Troy, during the time period. So while we can not really say Achilles existed, or in fact the Trojan War, as represented in the Iliad, took place, there is enough evidence to say, well, “maybe, and even “possibly.” Considering the evidence, the Achilles character, or someone like him could have existed (stripped of all the legends – half god, protected from harm, except in the heel, etc.). The evidence shows the story fits the times, and the times fit the story, from multiple sources.

- However, we have none of this type of evidence in support of David.

There are no independent sources to show that David was the king of a united Israel, never mind a mighty king ruling over a relatively vast empire from the Nile to the Euphrates. There is no evidence in the well kept and organized Egyptian chronicles to support this Biblical claim. There is nothing in the remains of the Babylonian, Assyrian or Phoenician writings about David or a mighty Jewish kingdom in the time frame presented in the Bible. Herodotus, who wrote in great detail about everything, never mentions David, never mind the Jews (which is interesting in itself).

Perhaps most damning of all, there is simply no archeological evidence at all to support either a mighty kingdom, in the time period, or a great temple built by his famous son, Solomon. There are no stone writings with his name or warning of the coming of the Great Jewish kingdom's army, nor actually artifacts of any kind dated back to the Davidic Kingdom. We do have one find, dated three hundred years after David, in which a king claims to be from the House of David, but that may only mean that David was a cultural icon, not a real king. Again, this is similar to the Kings of England claiming descent from King Arthur.

The artifacts from that time period of about 1000 BC actually show “the holy land” to be a relatively disorganized land dominated by peoples and cultures other than the Jews (or Hebrews or Israelites, as a more proper term for the time). The evidence clearly shows that the “David” portrayed in the Bible did not exist. To put it more generously, the David story cannot, at this time, be proven. There seems to be agreement among serious, “disinterested” historians that if David existed at all, he was a minor leader of a minor group, perhaps even a group of outlaws; a Robin Hood (maybe) rather than a King Richard.

This expansion of the “rule” of the culture hero is nothing new. The Arthur stories start him off as the king of a small Celtic land in Britain. Remember the name England is derived from the Angles invaders who along with the Saxons and Jutes came much later than Arthur. These invaders actually defeat Arthur's “descendants.” It is only in this later time period that the medieval legends of King Arthur ruling over all of Europe grow. So, it appears that the land under the

rule of David expanded as his myth grew. Nothing really new here, except since it was in the Bible, for centuries it was deemed true, and unchallengeable.

Despite the extensive findings in Greece, and the non-findings in Israel, David remains in the minds of most Americans as a real and important person in history, the best king of a united Israel, the killer of Goliath. With all that we know, cultural myths still determine popular belief.

With our limited understanding of time, we can see how fifteen hundred years of “culture myth” is hard to undo. Contemporary Christianity (and Judaism and Islam) is trying to maintain beliefs in an increasingly secular world, where research and evidentiary procedures are trumping many of the foundations of the various creeds. So the demystification of David has not gotten a lot of “air time.” The belief that David was a real historical leader as portrayed in the Bible is still the belief of most people, at least in America. So, myth triumphs over facts again, and cultural heroes are hard to dethrone. When people really think that myths are facts its makes writing about facts of the past so very difficult.



From the Museum of Antiquities in Ankara showing just a very few items that support the existence of the Ancient cultures mentioned in the Iliad and far older, while none have been found to support the kingdom of David (personal photographs)

Introductory Essay 7

Comment on How the Religion of Culture Heroes Affect History

The David/Achilles comparison is just one example of countless numbers of folk myths that confuse our understanding of world history. Religion since it is often interwoven with myth adds to this confusion. The religious cultures in the “New World” prior to the arrival of the Europeans raise interesting questions which we will not be able to explore in depth. How did these cultures arise? Why are there so many similarities to the cultures of the West, with some wild variations, of some “Western themes?” Was there “Pre Columbian Contact,” and if so by whom, and how often? The reason I raise the issue of Pre-Columbian Contact, which as I noted is a very interesting area of research that I spent ten years exploring, is because this is an area of research that is now in direct conflict between “scientific research” and its findings, and the beliefs of one of the fastest growing religions in the world, Mormonism, or the Church of the Latter Day Saints.

Among the fundamental beliefs of the Mormons is that a major part of the populations of the New World, when “discovered” by Columbus, were the descendants of “Jews” fleeing the “promised land” under the Prophet Lehi around 600 BC, and finding refuge in the near empty “Americas.” There they developed cities and civilizations (and half the people turned into Indians, and went “savage.”) So, the cities that were “discovered” by the Spanish when they arrived in the early 16th Century were the products of the “Whites.” According to the Mormon faith, the eventual destroyers of the “city” cultures, some 1200 years into the story, or about 600 AD, were those brown “Indians.”

Oh yes, according to the Mormons, Jesus stopped off in the New World, after the crucifixion and before his ascent into to Heaven, to give the “good news” to these children of Israel too. In addition, as noted

- The Book of Mormon states that there were pre-Columbian peoples that were white, literate, had knowledge of Old World languages, and possessed Old World derived writing systems. (E.g. [1 Nephi 13:23](#) et. seq.) They smelted [metal](#) and made [tools](#) and [weapons](#) of [iron](#), [steel](#), and [brass](#). (E.g. [Ether 7:9](#), [10:23](#)) They owned domesticated [horses](#) and [cattle](#). They possessed [chariots](#). (E.g. [Alma 18:9-12](#)) The people covered the “entire land.”
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeology_and_the_Book_of_Mormon
- Several groups of Mormon scholars and apologists, including the [Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research](#) (FAIR) and the [Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies](#) (FARMS), have proposed that the city [Zarahemla](#) is located somewhere within Central America because of the description given in [Alma 22:27](#) as a narrow neck of land bordering the sea on both the west and on the east. This approach, often referred to as the “[Limited Geography Model](#),” argues for a more limited view of the *Book of Mormon*, suggesting that the book is a

history of only a small group of Native Americans in Central America.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Mormon#Another_Testament_of_Christ

Yet all of the claims of the Mormons are not supported by modern day archeology. This is not to say, in keeping with my general premise that it will not some day be supported, but so far it does not. So, again we have strong beliefs in a religion, where the findings of science and research contradict the beliefs. This Mormon view continues to cause problems in the research of the “New World” since there are now Mormon “experts” who are interpreting findings to support their religion. Meanwhile “science” indicates that the Native American cultures of the New World arose independently with a history dating back much further.

- Our current culture is filled with these conflicts between religion and science. At the heart of these conflicts is the incompatibility between Darwinism (what a term!) or actually, the theory of evolution versus what is now being called “intelligent design” which is basically “creationism” (Scopes still lives).

I can not go into details on these conflicts here. I simply need to move forward (or actually backward) with the understanding that we really do not know much about the past. We tend to base our understanding of the past on contemporary values and prisms, and on our few books from the Ancients that have survived. We just need to remember that much of what we “know” is based not on facts, but on “cultural myths” presented as facts by the “powers that be.”

We have come a long way in just getting away from the concept that the world was created some 6000 years ago (give or take a few years, in spite of various fundamentalists that still cling to this belief.

- The idea that we can now “safely” talk about life some 50,000 years ago is a major break through in itself, and is only something that has happened in the very short time span of some 250 years or so.

As has been so well documented, these persons, these fundamentalists have focused on infiltrating school boards across the country in an attempt to control what can or can not be taught in schools (and their focus is not just issue of “evolution.”)

In the face of all our knowledge of the world, these true believers are still given credence in society. In the face of all evidence, they reject any contradiction or error in the Bible

- **Biblical inerrancy** is the doctrinal position that in its original form, the [Bible](#) is totally without error, and free from all contradiction; “referring to the complete accuracy of Scripture, including the historical and scientific parts”. Inerrancy is distinguished from [Biblical infallibility](#) (or limited inerrancy), which holds that the Bible is inerrant on issues of faith and

practice but not history or science.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_inerrancy

Due to the politics of the day, and the ability of these persons who are “true believers” to assert great influence, it is perhaps more difficult to gain a fair hearing for the subject that I write about than in the last one hundred years.

So there are many barriers to writing effectively about this religion-history issue. At a minimum we need to look at 12000 years of history in the area we now call the “Near East” Unlike the history of the United States, the area we need to look at has been conquered, and actually destroyed, many times. The records of these areas are far from complete. In fact, we have almost nothing from the past, compared to what was created.

In addition, the very language we use to describe the past is clouded by the terms of the “winners” For one simple example, the term “pagan” literally, when first used to describe non-Christians, meant “a rural person”, in the derogatory sense ... like a “country bumpkin.” It was meant to promote the Christians as the urban intellectual and the non-Christians as just too dumb to understand the “truth.” Yet it was the Christians who were, for the most part, originally living in the country (Jesus was from the country side, and his followers were fisherman), and it was the classical religions that dominated the cities even late into the end days of the Roman Empire. It was also the Christians who were the anti-intellectuals who worked to close schools of thought and were destroying works of science.

“Spin” is nothing new. Since the “pagans” were incapable of understanding the “divine truth” of Christianity, they were considered to be incapable of reason as well. So no matter how learned in science or medicine or any other skill, if a Roman could not accept the divinity of Jesus as “fact,” he was stupid (a pagan).

- This Christian “logic” was successfully mocked in the first film version of the “*Planet of the Apes*” where the human, Charlton Heston was deemed as ignorant and incapable of thought because he could not quote some of the Ape’s sacred writings.

In reading what remains of the texts of the Ancients and the Classical writers, it is often hard to tell what is a “fact,” and what is “spin.” For example, there is just one, and only one reference, in one and only one work, that declares that Nero blamed the Christians for the fire that destroyed most of Rome in 64 AD. In Tacitus “Annals” it says:

Consequently, to get rid of the report (of blame on him), Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. ... Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacitus>

Out of this one reference, written in 117 AD, or some fifty years after the event, and during a time when Christians were being singled out for some persecutions comes our historic image of the Christians being “thrown to the lions” based on the fire in Rome. However, none of the contemporaries of Tacitus or historians at the time of the event who wrote about the fire mention this “fact,” that the Christians were blamed; while most do tend to blame Nero for the fire.

The accusation against that Nero used the Christians as the scapegoat is unsupported by facts, and not corroborated by other evidence (or even logic). Despite the lack of support, this one reference has been used by the Christians as “fact” and presented as a truth for many reasons.

- The “fact” that Nero persecuted them, proves that Christians existed in Rome at the time, (which is mainly not supported by other “facts” or other the writings in the Bible)” Based on what we know it is a stretch to assume that the Christians in Rome were important enough to be recognized in any way. The folk history derived from Tacitus suggests that there were throngs of Christians in Rome which is also unsupported by any documents other than the Bible.

The idea that in just one generation after the crucifixion there were “multitudes of Christians” in Rome, was given as “proof” by the Church of the success of people like Paul and Peter. This is good propaganda, used in the next few hundred years, for a group struggling to get recognized and to be seen as important. Actual evidence indicates that if there was a “time of Martyrs” as portrayed by the Church, it was not during the time of the fire, but some 150 years later (early third century). It appears that the early Church itself did not put much credence into the Nero “persecutions”.

However, over time, this one statement in Tacitus has been multiplied so many fold as to become undisputed “truth.” Such is how our concept of history is made. In fact, the whole story of how we see the event is out of whack with history, and provable facts.

- We see or have heard endlessly that “Nero fiddled while Rome burned,” and we accept this image, despite the fact that the “fiddle” was invented 1000 years later.

We can prove that whole image and even the story of Nero blaming the Christians to be false. However, the countless movies, pictures, and stories about Christian persecutions under Nero, and “great multitudes” of Christians being burned, and eaten by lions, all these images present the “popular” knowledge of the time. It matters little that the whole story appears to be false. It is one of the few mental pictures of the past world that most Americans may have in common (cultural myths).

How do we know the story is false? For one thing, at the time of the fire, we can clearly show that there were no “great multitudes” of Christians in Rome (if there were in fact “great multitudes” of Christians anywhere). There is little evidence

that Christians were even called that term in 64 AD. In fact, Tacitus use of the term is the first writings in which the followers of Christ were referred to as “Christians.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian>.

Also, when considering the politics of the time, it would have made more sense for Nero to blame the Jews since the Jews were always agitating against Roman rule,. The Great Revolt was just starting in Judea, and the Jews were the leading voices against Nero’s effort to be considered “a living God.” Furthermore, the Jewish may have in fact comprised 10% or more of the whole Empire’s population with surely far greater numbers of Jews in Rome than Christians who in 64 AD could not have had anywhere near those numbers. In some ways, it could be compared to the United States blaming an off shoot of the whirling dervishes for 911, rather than the leadership of militant fundamentalist Islamic movements. There is a connection between the whirling dervishes (who are not into “earthly politics,” so to speak) and the Islamists, but the dervishes offered no threat to the State. As in the time, if the Christian movement was seen as part of the Jewish resistance, it definitely was not involved in “earthly” politics, as were the active Jewish fighters.

But the *Annals* were written nearly fifty years after the crushing of the Jewish Revolt (and at a time of decreased importance of Jews in Roman politics). At the time of Nero Christians were, if anything, little more than a nuisance, however they were beginning to make their presence felt during the time of Tacitus. Therefore, Tacitus appears to be spinning an anti-Christian vent, rather than an anti-Jewish vent, at the actual time of the writing of his Christian Fire story. We can see similar examples of this tactic throughout history. For example, in modern times Hitler blamed the Jews for Germany losing World War I. Blaming them for events in the past gave him the justification to attack them in his present time.

In looking at this statement by Tacitus, the options we are left with include:

- He actually was portraying the events as happened ... Nero blamed the Christians
- He changed the history to meet the issues of his time (blaming the Christians for past issues when the Christians were becoming a problem)
- The statement was an insertion of a later time (as many histories were altered to meet the needs of their current times (Stalinization of history?)
 - The writings of Flavius Josephus were altered in the late 5th Century, in an effort to give validation to “the human Christ” since no history written in the time period of Jesus mentioned him at all.

Of the three options, the latter two are the most likely. However, based on the one and one only statement, (which got repeated and repeated in the writings of future generations) Nero's persecution of the Christians has been accepted and actually was taught to generations after generations as “fact”. Joseph Goebbels was not the first to understand the concept of making “truth” out of the constant repetition of a lie.

Our “history” and our understanding of “history” is often based on culture myths and this myth of Christians and Nero is a major center piece associated with the rise of the Christians. With all the “myths” of history accepted as “facts”, this effort of mine, to write about a potential origin of Christian rituals and religious dogma is no easy task. Little is really known or remembered, and what was the “spin” of the time is now “dogma.” Therefore trying to sort out the origins of the past comes right up against cultural “norms” and beliefs (cultural myths) of the present.

- Even what we think we know about history, it turns out is most likely not true.

If we, me as the writer, and you as the reader, are really operating with different understandings of history and terms, communication between us is very difficult. One of my favorite episodes of the TV show, *Star Trek - The Next Generation* had the crew of the Enterprise meeting a race of beings with equal or better technology than the Federation. However, despite the advanced technology and the use of the “Universal Translator” what the new “people” were saying when they spoke could not be understood by the crew of the Enterprise ... the words were translated, but the meaning of the sentences were completely beyond the reach of our “heroes.” The problem faced by crew of the Enterprise was that the “terms” used in the language of the new “competitors” were entirely based on the folk myths and cultural heroes of their planet.

Since the Enterprise crew had no knowledge of the folk heroes and other myths, they could understand the words spoken, but had no understanding of the meaning of the proper nouns and the events to which they referred, and what these events meant to the “people” of this new culture. In explaining the problem one of the crew said it is “like us saying Juliet on the balcony ... We know what we mean by that, since we know the story of Romeo and Juliet; but without that knowledge we would not understand the reference or the allusion intended.”

This different understanding of terms, or a lack of an understanding of the allusions involved when using a proper term, occurs not just between us as a writer and a reader of these books. We are all faced with much the same problem in trying to read the Bible or any of the books of the Ancients or Classicalists. In hindsight, we naturally use our modern concepts and terms, since we really do not know the culture of the time or the intended use of words (especially since we mainly read it in translations of translations, and in rewrite after rewrite.... etc.).

For example, we can not really know if the reference to Isaac with all the events involved in the story was really “code” of the time concerning a child designated to be sacrificed. Yet, all persons “of the time” of the reading or telling of the story may have known instantly that this was the designated child for sacrifice. In the present we simply do not have the understanding or knowledge. In short, we lack context.

- When reading the story of Abraham and Isaac, with our modern views, we often feel anguish over Abraham's choices. The Ancients, from their point of view may have had no such feelings, seeing the event, the sacrifice of the first born, at that time, as normal and expected. Therefore, we moderns interpret the story in a vastly different manner than the Ancients would have at the time the story was being told.
- We see this as a story of God testing Abraham's devotion, and the non-killing of Isaac as a reward for the devotion; while the Ancients saw this as a story of God and Abraham solidifying the great contract between them (guaranteeing the greatness of Abraham's descendants). Isaac's not being killed (or possible being killed and resurrected), was only an added bonus.
 - Later we will see that many Christians see the death of Jesus as actually completing the act that was required, but not completed, in the non-death of Isaac.

In addition, our understanding of the concept of religions in general is jaded and conflicted by our modern views. For example, why was there such a focus on the "next world" by the Christians? This idea of a "heaven" in the way the Christians were portraying it was relatively new to the Western world. We, in the modern Christian world, have been told for generations that this new view of Heaven (and also the new view of Hell) was new divine knowledge and a new truth revealed, and therefore, fact.

However, in order to understand these new concepts of the Christians (for Heaven and Hell- if truly new ideas from the Christians), we actually need to look, not at the "divine" but at the mundane. We need to look at a long series of political crises that had raked the "Middle East" for centuries, and also at an ensuing set of political crises that overcame Rome, as the Christians obtained power.

- It was during this later period of Roman crisis that Christianity created its "mass" appeal, and its "ideology" of the importance of "hereafter." As Christianity obtained the status of state sanction, statements of absolutist approaches concerning the "rites" needed to obtain eternal reward, finally found an audience ready to consider "other world" solutions for the problems they faced.

In understanding this book, we need to think in terms of the people living at the times of the events, and back away from our modern understandings, which as I have suggested, are mainly based on historical folk myth. We need to ask ourselves why, or what was it about Christianity that was appealing to those who did join at the time. Also for the purpose of this book, we need to ask how this appeal was connected to the Phoenicians, and their religion.

We need to look at not just the key attraction of Christianity, which was its simplicity, but also its offer of life, and "success", not in here and now, but in the

ever after. In many ways the whole concept or cornerstone of the religion could be summed up in one of the statements in the New Testament:

John 3:16-18

For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only Son (ton huion ton monogenee)**, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name **of the only Son of God (tou monogenous tou huio tou theou).**”

This is the quote that the “rainbow hair guy” has been waving into the cameras of sporting events in the US for decades. According to Wikipedia, John 3-16-18 has been called the “Bible in a nutshell” because it is considered a summary of some of the most central doctrines of traditional Christianity”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_3:16 . While Wikipedia offers more than two dozen translations of the quote, the core element of each of the variations remain the same: The belief in Jesus as the Son of God leads to the salvation. This is simplicity at its best.

However, as with all “mystery religions of the rising god” there is a bit more involved. It is here that we start to see the door opening towards the older religion of the Phoenicians. For John goes on to say,

John 4:9-10, 14-15

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent **his only Son (ton huion autou ton monogenee)** into the world, **so that we might live through him.** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us **and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins...** And we have seen and testify **that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

So it is not just the act of God and his love that leads to salvation, it is the fact that Christ died, and through Christ’s death there is the opening for salvation. We find this allusion again in 1 **Cor. 15:3-7:**

- For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins.

Was this concept of the sacrifice of the son the greater ‘good news’? Or was it a revival of a repressed religion of the area that was, for nearly 1500 years (a long time), the dominant religion of the region.

- Was the Christ story the retelling in different form of the story of Ba’al and, therefore a revival of Baalism? (Or at least a central story of the Phoenician culture?)
- Are there other aspects of Ba’al and Ba’alism in the Christian faith and if so, what are they and how are they manifested?

These questions will be the focus of these books.

To truly answer these questions we need to know a great deal about the rise of religion in general, the origins of the “sky gods” and the competitive nature of religions and cultures in the ancient world.

We also need to know the success or failures of the peoples who worshiped certain gods and how the success or failure of these peoples impacted the “success” of these gods with other peoples.

- It is the general premise of this book that political and economic crises had a tremendous impact on the religion of peoples and that changes in religions, across the millennia, are greatly associated with the response to these crises.

Christianity was distinguished by its views on death and salvation, its response to being condemned, and its focus on “other worldliness.” In order to understand how a religion with these particular characteristics eventually gains success, we need to also understand the “crisis” and multiple crises that led to the development of this world view. We need to attempt to understand these stories from the perspective of the people who wrote or said them, not through the layers of folklore that have been added through the centuries.

Above all, we have to put away preconceived notions of what the Ancient world was like and what the religious nature of this time was about (including what ever time frames we have been led to believe about the growth or status of any religion).

Lastly, to appreciate this effort I am putting forth is the need to put away “belief” in general, for a while. This book is not intended to challenge belief in God, or Gods, or any other aspects of religion that are matters of “faith.” I accept the rights of people to believe in whatever they need to as long as it does not call for harm to be done to others. So, I am simply asking for those who believe in the “word of God” in one book or another, to allow me to make this exploration into what “facts” we have and to at least respect my conclusions. For one reason or another, no one has to agree with my conclusions and I welcome arguments based in “fact” not based solely in what the Bible or some other religious book states to be fact, but facts based on research and multiple sources of evidence.

So this effort may appear foolish, since I am asking a great deal of the modern reader. However, fools rush in and the best of my friends will always say I’m foolish in so many ways.

Introductory Essay 8

More Comments on Use of Such Terms as Ancient and Classical: A Key to Understanding the Past?

Throughout this work I will use the terms “Ancient world”, and “Classical world.” While these terms have various definitions, I will use these terms to represent “world views,” rather than just time elements. There are clashes of great importance to this story that are really clashes between the Ancient world view and the Classical world view, and later Jewish, Christian and to some lesser degree Muslim world views (not to demean the Muslim world view, it is just that in this time line of this work, the Muslim religion was not developed). Therefore, when I use the term “the Ancient world” I am referring to the world of the Semitic and Egyptian peoples of the Near East. I will also include the Persians in this grouping for political issues, but will present the Persian view of religion as a different element apart from Ancient or Classical.

The Classical world refers to the world view and culture developed by the Greek and Roman concepts of society and religion. (Again, not to ignore the Chinese and Indians of Ancient times, its just that they have relatively little impact on the story line presented) I will also use the term Jewish and Christian world view to designate “concepts, not a meaning a time or place. In addition, as we shall see, much of the land mass North Africa and Southern Europe was actually first “civilized” by representative peoples of the Ancient world, primarily the Phoenicians; therefore we really need to look both at “time and space”, as well as “culture” to understand how the divisions of the Ancient and Classical come about.

There is not a clear dividing line for when the Ancient world ended and the Classical world began, or when the Christian world became dominant, etc. The time period of the Ancient world and the Classical world overlap, so we cannot clearly say this is where the Classical world view begins and the Ancient ends (or if in fact it did end). This discussion will become clearer throughout the course of the writing.

- However, in general, for the Ancient world view, I am talking about the religious, political and philosophical views of peoples from the various cultures of the Near East, as well as the pre-Classical Greeks and other peoples who share the religious beliefs that will be outlined in this book. We can trace these beliefs back, in some form of development, several millennia to roughly 10,000 BC. Of course, these “Ancient” views were not completely stagnant, and changed a great deal over this time. However, these peoples maintained a core belief and “universal” understanding that was distinctive

- With the Classical world view, I am talking about the religious, political and philosophic concepts of the Greek and Roman peoples (and peoples who later shared their beliefs). The Classical world lasted, according to standard history, roughly from 750 BC or so to 450 AD (with some vestiges carrying over into the Byzantine Empire).

The situation is complicated greatly throughout these two books in that I see the “Christian world” as in many ways the continuation of the “Ancient world” view, morphed, and dominating most of the political and cultural events of the West until current times. Therefore, I tend to argue that the “Ancient world” view has never ended, and is well represented in its current form in modern Western religions.

Also, I need to quickly review the differences and similarities between what I am calling here the Ancient world view, and the Classical world view,

Much between them is similar:

- They both saw the world as more or less governed by a number of gods, with various degrees of powers, influences and realms.
- They both strongly believed in the influences of the stars, in so far as astrology was important (and perhaps one of the most ancient of all “sciences.” This point will need to be considered in greater detail as an option for the explanation of religious beliefs and rituals.
- They both believed in evil forces, as well as good forces (although it is not until the Persians, do we see belief in a single evil being).
- They both were mainly strong believers in predestination ... the fate of man was determined and could not be undone.

It is with this point, the fate, or perhaps better stated, the role of man, that the Classical world view and the Ancient world view tended to depart from each other. The key difference of the Ancient view and the Classical view was the role of “man” within society.

- In the Ancient world view, the gods were mainly portrayed as animals or part human and part animal. In the Classical world, the gods were mainly human in shape and form (divine, but human in form).
- In the Ancient world, the priest and the temples were dominant players in the society, often controlling vast amounts of the wealth of the land. On the other hand in the Classical world there were priest and temples, but they were less influential and less wealthy. The “governments instituted among men” were the dominant force in society.
- In the Ancient world, the rulers mainly owned everything (land and people) and people were completely subservient to the state; where in the Classical world, property could be owned by individual citizens and people had relative freedom: Although the Classical world accepted slavery, the role of a “free citizen” was added.

- In the Ancient world, the rulers were kings and often considered divine, and people were responsible to the needs of the state. In the Classical world, at least in the developing periods, the state was often ruled by councils and senates. The Classical world featured a more a republican form of government. Even where there were kings, they were limited in power by these government structures and the state was presumed to represent the will of people (either the masses or an oligarchy). The state was seen as being at least somewhat responsible to the needs of the people. Unlike in the world of the Ancients, in the Classical world, social based revolutions, demanding new rights for the citizens, or adding more people to the citizen roles were at least present, if not somewhat frequent.
- The Ancient world looked to the gods as the cause of all things, and in the Classical world, people were allowed, at least in some limited forms, depending on the time and location, to look for answers, beyond the concepts of religion, to issues based in science, logic and even psychology after a form.

This list is mainly one of great generalities, with obvious examples of contradictions to this simplicity. Alexander the Great saw himself as a divine son of Zeus, and Carthage, a representative of the Ancients, was ruled by a senate, to name a few exceptions to this rule. In part, these contradictions come about due to one of the main themes of this book; how and when cultures merge and morph, and the issue of “absorbing and absorber cultures.”

- The successor rulers of Alexander, themselves, while spreading much of the concepts of the Classical world, became more like the rulers of the Ancient world, going so far as to declare themselves divine which is something Alexander was chastised for doing.

There are two pieces of surviving literature from Ancient and Classical times that show us some of the cultural conflicts between changing and merging cultures.

The first is represented in the “Old Testament, in I Samuel Chapter 8, where the people are demanding the protection of a “king” to better fight off the Philistines. Here we see a people choosing to move towards the “Ancient” view of rule, and away from what is considered “tribal” rule. This tribal form of rule, however, also can be seen as more of a precursor of “Classical view” of rule. (Both the Ancient view and the Classical view, grew out of a “tribal view” of the world.) Here, the Hebrews of the time, were still in a “tribal culture” which is one that is very old and existed prior to the advent of the Ancient world view, as presented here. So, the Hebrews here are asking to join the more “modern – Ancient world”, so to speak, when they ask for the king.).

I Samuel Chapter 8

11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over

fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

13 And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

The second piece is from Plato's Republic,

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.2.i.html> where, in Book One, Socrates and others are engaged in a discussion on the origins of issues of political power.

One of the people begins by saying

And the different forms of government make laws democratically, aristocratically, tyrannical, with a view to their several interests; and these laws, which are made by them for their own interests, are the justice which they deliver to their subjects, and him who transgresses them they punish as a breaker of the law, and unjust. And that is what I mean when I say that in all states there is the same principle of justice, which is the interest of the government; and as the government must be supposed to have power, the only reasonable conclusion is, that everywhere there is one principle of justice, which is the interest of the stronger.

Then Socrates begins his traditional approach of questioning:

... tell me, Do you admit that it is just of subjects to obey their rulers?

I do.

But are the rulers of states absolutely infallible, or are they sometimes liable to err?

To be sure, he replied, they are liable to err.

Then in making their laws they may sometimes make them rightly, and sometimes not?

True.

When they make them rightly, they make them agreeably to their interest; when they are mistaken, contrary to their interest; you admit that?

Yes.

And the laws which they make must be obeyed by their subjects, --and that is what you call justice?

Doubtless.

Then justice, according to your argument, is not only obedience to the interest of the stronger but the reverse?

What is that you are saying? he asked.

I am only repeating what you are saying, I believe. But let us consider: Have we not admitted that the rulers may be mistaken about their own interest in what they command, and also that to obey them is justice? Has not that been admitted?

Yes.

Then you must also have acknowledged justice not to be for the interest of the stronger, when the rulers unintentionally command things to be done which are to their own injury. For if, as you say, justice is the obedience which the subject renders to their commands, in that case, O wisest of men, is there any escape from the conclusion that the weaker are commanded to do, not what is for the interest, but what is for the injury of the stronger?

Nothing can be clearer, Socrates, said Polemarchus. ...

Yes, Cleitophon, but he also said that justice is the interest of the stronger, and, while admitting both these propositions, he further acknowledged that the stronger may command the weaker who are his subjects to do what is not for his own interest; whence follows that justice is the injury quite as much as the interest of the stronger. Yes, I said, my impression was that you did so, when you admitted that the ruler was not infallible but might be sometimes mistaken.

Here we see the changing context for rule from the point of view of the Ancients and the Classical world views. The Ancients saw rule as absolute and with all powers in the hands of the king, thought the designation of the Gods (or at least that is what the leaders told their people). The Classicalist acknowledged different types of rule and that the rulers often operated in ways that were not, in their own, or their peoples' interest (with no mention of God or Gods controlling their actions). Furthermore, they acknowledged that those rulers are not infallible, nor always good.

This is a major difference in a world view; the ancients saw rulers as presenting the will of gods, and the Classicalist saw rulers as men, who as men, could make errors.

- Therefore, please be aware that the Ancient and Classical terms are not interchangeable but are deliberately used for specific purposes throughout this book.

One more area that needs to be expanded upon in this comment on terms: It is clear that the terms used to refer to people and ideas change over time. Also, terms change their meaning over time. For example, what should I call the people who were followers of Yahweh (or at least prior to Christ)? There are multiple terms, and each one is correct at a particular time.

So, at times there were the Hebrews, and then the Israelites, then there were some who were Israelites and some who were Judeans, and eventually they were Jews. This period of name change, at least according to the Biblical time line covers some 1500 years at a minimum (again, a very long time.). There were times of transition where the peoples were Hebrews and Israelites, and there was also a period of joint existence when there were both Israelites and Judeans. What complicates issues more is there soon became subdivisions within the Jews of a certain time period. These subdivisions were not the ones we traditionally think of such as, Pharisees, Zealots, etc. Of particular importance to my theory are the peoples that were remnants of Israelites and Judeans, and were still “on the land” long after the time that traditional history says that they were “eliminated.”

- In each of the cases, during this long time, the culture and the religion of the peoples associated with the each of the names were actually substantially different, and these differences and the conflicts between these differences play an important part of the story.

The terms in modern times are often misused and cause a great deal of confusion among people, especially in the effort I am undertaking. For example,

- God did not promise Canaan to the Jews, but to the Hebrew descendants of Abram (or Abraham)
- The Jews were not slaves unto Pharaoh, the Hebrews were the people who went into Egypt, and the Hebrews/Israelites came out of Egypt.
- David was not the king of the Jews, but the king of Israel and the Israelites

The proper term “Jew”, in referring the “Jewish” religion and the Jewish people, only becomes used among the people themselves and among others sometime in the 5th Century BC, when the “Jews” began to come back from seventy years of captivity in Babylon to the land around the ruins of the temple in Jerusalem.

- The Hebrew name "Yehudi" (plural *Yehudim*) .. originally referred to the people of the southern kingdom, although the term *B'nei Yisrael* (Israelites) was still used for both groups. ... Its first use in the [Bible](#) to refer to the Jewish people as a whole is in the [Book of Esther](#).
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew>

No wonder Herodotus made no reference to the “Jews” since the term “Jews” was first used some 200 years or so after his death.

Therefore, throughout this work I will refer to the group of the worshipers of Yahweh as the name best used to describe the people in the time frame of which I am speaking. I will also use terms like Hebrew/Israelites, or Israelite/Jews to indicate a transition period.

And as we will see there are problems with the modern use of other terms such as Phoenicians and Canaanites, which are basically the same people. In addition, the term Orthodox Christian has so many variations in meaning that it's becomes very confusing at times. The meaning changes depending on who is accusing another of being a "heretic" and who is claiming the mantle of being "Orthodox." All this and more I will attempt to sort out as we go along, by use of terms that try to show transition periods and differing names for the same peoples or beliefs.

Introductory Essay 9

Comments on the American Experience – A Problem in Understanding History

In general, the history that is presented to us, in America, (again not in the advanced classes, but in general education) is that of the linear transition from the Ancient to the Classical to the Christian world, with a final transition in the Age of Modernism.

- Under this standard rubric, the Ancient world supposedly faded into the Classical world some time between 325 BC – 100 AD with the invasion of the Near East under Alexander, and the solidification of Roman power in that area. The Classical world subsequently faded into the Christian world beginning sometime in the mid third century.

However, this concept is again greatly tainted by the Christian and American world view. In both the books, *Religion of the Occident*, and in *The Closing of the Western Mind*, the authors argue that the concepts of liberty and freedom of thought developed by the Classical mind view lost out to the concepts of absolutism and control of the deity over nearly a 1,000 year period.

- Both works state that the Europe of the Post-Roman Empire period (that which is called the Dark Ages, and the early Medieval period) looked like the world of the Ancients (with its absolute rulers, its religious domination, and its use of God as the answer to all events (God wills it). Furthermore, both books show how the Classical world lost out in Europe, to the Ancient's world view.
- The authors of these books would say that the great victories of the Greeks at Marathon and Salamis were revered over the course of some 1000 years with the development of the absolutist Roman rulers, supported by the absolutist Christian church.

Both books generally conclude that the Europe of the 6th- 10th centuries looked more like Hindu India of say 1000 BC (a major source of the Ancient world view), than any other culture in history.

- While this process of the eventual reverse triumph of the Ancient world view over the Classical view is also a major foundation of this work, we cannot go into the details of these events to the extent needed, and I highly recommend that the readers of this work also read these two stated books as well.
- Throughout world history, today, the vast majority of the world's people view history based on religious "beliefs" and not historical "facts".

In the US, most persons assume that the events of history in the Bible (or other sacred books) are true to some (greater or lesser) degree. Even if we get beyond a rejection of the Eden story and the flood, most people, at least in America,

think, that the Exodus from Egypt took place in some form of other, that “Joshua fit the battle of Jericho,” and that David and Solomon were mighty kings.

Despite mounting evidence that the history listed above is not supported by fact, most people still accept them as “facts” because it was taught to them through religion and also through public schools. Even with the development of non-church based schools, or public education, in the West, much of what was taught in the new school systems had to be accepted and approved by the various churches.

In addition, the concept of the “White Man’s Burden” still prevails in the minds of most Americans today if in somewhat different forms. Americans still believe that it is their role to “Bring Democracy to the world.” Perhaps we should say that the “White Man’s Burden has evolved into the “American burden.” The belief in some form of “manifest destiny” though somewhat dated, still prevails in this country. Most people (or at least most politically active people) in this country still think of the US in the same context as the old Christian view of the “Shining City on the Hill”, or, the only hope for human kind.

Americans tend to see the world as almost predetermined and continual in the process. We tend not to be a cynical people, but one that believe in the notion that “right will prevail”, and events will occur to assure continuation and progress. This concept of predetermination and progress is actually, strangely enough, manifested in the fact that some 40% of Americans think that the second coming of Jesus will occur in their lifetimes, and that the end of the world as we know it will come about as described in the Bible.

Perhaps it’s because so many people in the United States are religious and believers in the eventual triumph of good over evil, (no matter how devastating this triumph, as described in “Revelations” will be for most people) we as a people have a distorted view of world history. We tend to see things as a chain of events always progressing, with perhaps a few bumps along the road, but always progressing towards the enviably positive outcome.

- We as a people tend to gloss over the “bad points in history” and only look at the “good” (which is perhaps a normal process). However, by doing so we miss what really happened in history, and perhaps more importantly, why it really happened. This ignorance of “real history” leaves us without the ability to project how others in the world will react to our actions.

Take for example the Crusades. If Americans know anything about the Crusades, it is that the wonderful Christian knights, driven by divine spirit, were able to gain control of the “Holy Land” back from the Muslim infidels, who had been preventing Christian pilgrims from going to pray at the holy places in the area.

So we gloss over the bad points, which are many. When it comes to the Crusades; we know little of the following points:

- The history of religious intolerance in the West and that the Muslims actually were among the most tolerant of rulers in so far as religion went.
- The Crusaders slaughtered Jews and Eastern Orthodox Christians, and almost everyone they encountered along the way who was not Roman Catholic, and
- When they finally reached Jerusalem, and took the city, they killed almost all of the inhabitants, regardless of age and religions.

Since we look at the history from the European Christian perspective, we think of the Crusades as the foundation for the Renaissance, since the Crusaders learned so much from going East. In doing so, we tend to ignore:

- The devastating impact the Crusades had on the overall history of culture, and especially on the political entity that the Crusades were originally intended to help, the Byzantine Empire (the remnants of the Roman Empire). In addition, the fourth Crusade did what no Muslim army had been able to do, take and sack Constantinople, and to establish for sixty years a Latin Empire in its place.
- The Crusades, by destroying Byzantium, actually helped to unlock the door to Europe, which enabled the Ottoman Turks to occupy the Balkans for close to 500 years, and almost led to the complete conquest of Europe by the Muslim Turks.

Since we don't really know history - what really happened - we can not really understand what others' perspectives are concerning the present. The average American may know that the Crusades failed and see them as a noble effort of noble knights, but they fail to understand that the Muslim's successful resistance to the Crusades over a one hundred and fifty year period continues to play out in current world politics. The Muslims see their history of resistance to the Crusaders as a model for today. It undoubtedly gives Muslims a historical basis for supporting "terror" as a means to resist.

- Osama Bin Laden modeled himself after the founder of the sect known in English as "the Assassins," who during the Crusading period, were able to use "suicide" attacks against leaders of both the Muslim and Christian sides to force political and military confrontations.

In addition, we simply do not get that the people of the region see the Crusades as a precursor to modern day European Imperialism. From this perspective we can see why they view Israel, and the invasion of Iraq as just a continuation of a war that has been raging for over 1600 years.

- We, in America, simply do not understand that the Crusades mostly had little to do with religion. We can't see how it was mainly a pretext for the younger nobility of Europe, who could not gain land in the Europe, to establish their own fiefdoms and kingdoms in new lands away from their older siblings.

In the minds of many of the current residents of the area, events look the same now as they did then. But we don't get this ... because we don't "get history."

A few years ago a movie was released call "*The Kingdom of Heaven*" which portrayed the Crusading period far closer to reality than any other cinematic effort. Although the story line was "Hollywoodized" to include a love story that never took place, the main story line of the Christians losing control of Jerusalem to the Islamic forces was fairly accurate (leaving out the fact that the Christians actually paid a huge ransom to get all the people safely out of Jerusalem). The movie mainly made the Christians, or at least the Christian knights, the bad guys, and, Muslims, under SaLaden, if not the good guys, at least the far more noble guys.

The movie had everything going for it; great action, Orlando Bloom, etc, and it bombed at the box office in the U.S. I would suggest that the failure was due to that fact that the Christians lose, and SaLaden (played by an actor who bore an amazing resemblance to Bin Laden,) enters Jerusalem in triumph, replacing Christian signage with Islamic ones (while showing respect for the Christian imagery). In a time of "war on terror," and with the rise of Christian fundamentalism, this movie never really had a chance in the US.

Almost at the same time another movie came out called "*Passion of the Christ*" created by Mel Gibson. The movie had almost "nothing" going for it, in so far as a film that generally appeals to Americans. It had no super stars, no major action, and the dialogue was spoken in relatively dead languages (Latin and Aramaic), which required subtitles (something most Americans hate). It also has a long scene of torture done in gruesome realism (ok, maybe, it had that going for it). This movie based on a very strict reading of the Bible, on the last day of the life of Christ, despite mixed reviews, and protests for its anti-Semitic bias, broke all kinds of box office records. It almost became a mandatory event for fundamentalist Christians to attend in order to see how "Christ died for our sins." It appears that the more gruesome the death, the more that it seems to appeal to those types of Christians.

Unfortunately, this response to the *Kingdom of Heaven*" and "*Passion of the Christ*" is typical to the Americans response to history in general. We as a people do not want to know much that runs counter to our world view, which is greatly tainted by our own positive experiences, as a people, and our own national views on (the Christian) religion. To greatly generalize this American view is to say;

- The general feeling of the traditional Americans is that it is okay to mainly forget about the past, and to more forward, into the wilderness or into the future, (and with one more line from Bob Dylan) "with God on our side."

However, this world view is primarily an American view, not shared by most peoples of the world. Unlike the history of the United States, most of the rest of the peoples of the world have known chaos and despotism as the norm throughout their history. If there was ever a "rise" of a people or nation, it was

surely followed by a great fall. Throughout history, we see time and again, that which was a rich and stable society wiped away and often expunged from existence.

If there was a recovery in these societies, it could take generations and epochs before the return of stability and growth. Often the return of stability was at the cost of the elimination of freedoms and a great demand for conformity. Other times stability came only because the culture was stimulated by foreign wars. For the history of humanity, in general, until very modern times, the statement of Hobbs that life was “nasty, brutish and short” was mostly, if not nearly completely, true. We can think of exceptions such as the periods of Inca and Maya rule in the Americas, at other times at the height of some Chinese and Indian rulers, for about one hundred years during the Roman Empire (only in some parts of the Roman Empire) and of course now in modern day America.

- For most of the peoples, and history of the world, nothing seemed inevitable except chaos and destruction, and tyranny of one form or another. (Our cynical view of “death and taxes” is something so very mild compared to others experiences.)

The extent of this world wide horror will be explored more as part of the second book of this effort; but;

What is clearly different from American history and that of most of the peoples of the world is that the US to date:

- Has never been destroyed or occupied (except for the Southern states in the Civil War), its peoples have never been sent off into servitude, nor has it experienced the collapse of its ecological systems, its central government. To date, we have never lived through periods of great plagues, with huge die offs, either.

The concept of the “end of the world is near” in America seems more like a punch line of a joke, than the real, often horrific experiences of most peoples of the Ancient and Classical world.

The “end of time” was not only “near”, it came for the Jews losing to the Babylonians, and the Romans (three times), In addition, we can see how the end of the world came for the peoples of the numerous beautiful cities throughout the Roman Empire that were destroyed by waves of German, or Hunnic invaders. The end of the world did come for ½ of the people of the Roman World who died during the plague of Justinian or 1/3 of the population of Europe who died during the Black Death; and on and on to the present day. For the peoples in cities that were exterminated and cultures and peoples that were enslaved and then driven from history, the world did, in fact, end.

- This living with the dread of the end, and an apparent inability to fend off the end, greatly shaped the view of the people under threat, and also the view of those remnants who did survive to build a world all over again.

In these “endings” we lost not only people, and art, but great knowledge of what was known and what had been known. Culture is not always maintained, and as we study history, we find not a direct line of advancement, but a hodgepodge of loops and currents leading all over the place. A great deal of knowledge is gained and then lost again. Therefore, we see periods of time where study and knowledge is fostered and developed, only to see that knowledge lost and forgotten for centuries. Yet, for some unknown reason, safety, and the pursuit of knowledge, in some places, begins again. (With our technology, and the use of the internet, our current upsurge in knowledge is clearly the most wide spread in history.)

To help the reader who is a modern American, who has never tasted these types of historical events of extensive disasters and social collapse, I will, to the extent possible, add allegorical modern events to perhaps give a flavor of what was going on in people’s minds of the time. The use of allegory and parallel events is difficult at best, but I will try to give the reader something, in our history to relate to, as best I can.

It is important, however, for American readers to understand what a great privilege and oddity the history of the United States to date has been in comparison with the history of the world. This is not to say that we don’t have a great deal of our own horrible acts (such as slavery or Indian wars and expulsions), we do. It is unclear how long this privilege will continue, but as long as it does, the American’s perspective of world history is greatly obstructed.

Introductory Essay 10

Comments on Cultural Conflicts – Some Times You Win Some Times You Lose, And Some Time You Can't Tell The Difference Between The Two.

Another concept we need to discuss prior to the main storyline is that of cultural conflict over the course of history; we need to introduce the idea of the “absorbing” and “absorber” cultures.

- The “absorbing cultures” tend to be those open and willing to add concepts from other “more advanced” civilizations. Examples of “absorbing” cultures include, but are obviously not limited to the German tribes such as the Vandals that tried to act more Roman than the Romans, the peoples of the Middle East who tried to become Hellenes, with the arrival of the Greeks and Alexander the Great, and also the Turks who upon entering the Middle East during the 7-10th Centuries attempted to become model Muslims.
- The “absorber” cultures tend to be the “dominant” culture of their time. Other peoples tend to emulate them the best that they can, and these absorber cultures tend to assimilate, over time, all the invading forces. Egypt and China are two examples of great absorber cultures. The Egyptian culture was developed some 6,000 years ago, the Chinese at least some 5,500 ago. For some 4,500 years, when any nation conquered Egypt, (until the Muslim conquests) the invaders soon copied the Egyptian frame work of religion, culture, and governance. Egypt absorbed the conquerors. The same can be said for China and its invaders; the development of the “fashion” of the Chinese pigtail was not a matter of taste, it was a mandate from a foreign conqueror (the Manchurians) in an effort to make the Chinese completely distinguishable from the Manchu invaders. This was intended to prevent the Manchu peoples from being “absorbed” into Chinese culture. The effort failed.

Most of what we know of as “great cultures” (Greece, Rome, England, etc) became absorber cultures, where people attempted to imitate the great. We should also include Phoenicia as one of these great absorber cultures of history, as many peoples in their times attempted to become Phoenician, in culture. While we have some understanding of the process of the spread of Hellenism, we have only limited knowledge of the history of the spread of the Phoenician culture. It appears that the processes were similar (although the Phoenicians were more likely to pass on the culture through trade than by warfare).

However, all these “great cultures” did not “jump full grown from the head of Zeus,” but started as absorbing cultures, gaining and adapting many ideas from the “preceding great culture.” For example, we now understand that the Romans built on the foundations of the Etruscans, etc. , and it also appears that much of Greek religion and culture was greatly influenced by Phoenicia. In fact, we can trace much of cultural development back through these rising and falling

absorber cultures, to almost a common beginning. To be more precise, there were more likely four separate common beginnings- in China, India, Sumer and Egypt, with Egypt's actually being the least important over the long term.

One of the hallmarks of the absorber cultures is an openness to at least allow for religious change and experimentation. As we have seen in studying the “great cultures” the religion of a “subjected people” becomes at the very least, an object of great curiosity, if not a great deal more to the super powers of the day.

- We can see simple examples of this in the Beatles becoming involved in Indian Mysticism, and how that led others in the West to experiment with this lifestyle.
- Of course, China’s fascination with Buddhism during the 7-9th centuries is a far more important example from world history.

Often, the religions of the absorbing cultures have a great long term impact. It is often with the fall of the culture, and the crises that arise from the fall, that greatly alters the religion of the “absorbing peoples”. For example, throughout the history of China we see that with the onset of economic crises, revolts based on new religions almost always ensue.

- Therefore, much of the history of these books will not be linked so much to the rise of the cultures, but to the fall of the cultures, and the role that religions play in explaining the fall, and offering answers for the failure to the people that are affected at the time.

It is at this point, when a cultural void develops. When the absorbing (major) culture is in great decline or has in fact “fallen” and there is no major dominant power around, that religion often can make manifest a “revelation,” creating a new and different interpretation of past events. Religion intercedes, explaining why empires rise and fall, and why peoples are enslaved or liberated. In the face of loss, the conquest, or the fall, life seems unbearable and defeat is all around. It is at such times, then, that religion can offer other views of the meaning of devastation.

Throughout history, security and freedom seem ephemeral at best. Societies used religion to address this loss of security and freedom on at least two levels:

- The first was to organize society, based on religion, to address the loss of security and freedom, and to rally resistance of people to the invading forces and to mandate support for the resistance, (As represented by the Jews against the Greeks and Romans, or the Muslim resistance to the West today.) and;
- The second is to offer people an alternative expectation for existence; an existence free from constant state of fear and tyranny and, eventually, free from the fear of “death.” Religion offered people escape from the feeling of no hope for any difference in the current state of the world in which they lived. It was used to offer hope for a better life “next time around” or “in the next world”, however that next time or next life was defined. In other words, religion provided hope for the hopeless (as

during the time of the Fall of Rome, or during the time of Russian serfdom, or American slavery, etc.).

This highlights the need to look closely at political issues as well as “sacred” ones. This evolution of religion (a nice commingling of ideas) and religious practices varied greatly in different settings based on the political realities and numerous other factors and impacts. Some of these include the invasions of other peoples, the changing needs in a given society, as a result of the invasions and other life and societal altering events.

- These books are not a story of humankind's search for the sacred, but how the profane established our view of the sacred.

One interesting issue, and a good example that serves as a basis for my point of view, is that of the religious views of the Roman state as it evolved from the Republic to the Principate, and finally to the Empire.

- As the state of Rome evolved from that of citizens in debate in the senate, to the eventual establishment of a military dictatorship of the Emperor, the Religion of Rome evolved from a belief in multiple gods arguing with each other (a senate of gods) to a sole god, all knowing and unchallengeable, with his court of angels.

Heaven itself changed. Where once it had looked like the old Senate, it soon resembled the court of the Emperor. As we will see later, the process of developing a One God/One Emperor religion took nearly one hundred and fifty years and included several options other than Christianity.

Therefore, the rise and fall of societies, and how they responded to both the rise and the fall, has greatly impacted religion. How we view this rise (as political or divine, or enviable) is critical to understanding the effort I put forth in these books. And also, we will see that, contrary to logic, often it is the absorbing culture, the losing, defeated or weaker culture that seems to often have the greatest impact on the religion of the times.

The one real power over time that the absorbing culture may have is religion and the use of religion against the power of the dominant, often absorber power. Some clear examples of this involve Christianity

- Christians (the religion of a defeated people) impacting Roman rule and culture
- Christians (the religion of the fallen empire) impacting the German replacement states of the Roman Empire

But there are clearly other examples in which religion is used as the basis for fighting against dominant powers

- The role of Islam in fighting Imperialism in the 19th centuries (revolts in Sudan and North Africa) and in the current struggles between the West and Islam

- And perhaps we can use the role of religion in fighting racism and Jim Crow in the United States.

Interestingly, the terms of religion, actually became the terms used in political and cultural resistance, simply because they were the only terms available for the people to use.

- This is either because of the terms of repression were developed under a religious context or because other terms had not yet been developed (Marx lived in the 19th Century, so the terms of resistance developed through Marx are relatively new to world history)

One of the prime examples of this use of religious terms known to the American experience is the use of religious song (spirituals) by African-Americans, both during slavery and Jim Crow, to express hope for the future, and to change the intent or the religion as presented to them, (salvation in the future) to meet their needs (liberation now). When the “battle for freedom” came in the later half of the 20th century, these religious songs cemented the movement together and provided the spirit and courage to the freedom fighters.

Introductory Essay 11

Have We Discovered the Precursor of the Crucifix?

We have long known that the “god on the cross” is an ancient motif far older than Christianity. So is this the first known representation of this concept? Is this the first Crucifix?



Pictured above is one of the remarkably well preserved ancient items found at a site named Gobekli Tepe in Turkey near the Syrian border. See <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/multimedia/photos/?c=y&articleID=30706129&page=6>

The possible near unmentionable nature of this object is that what we see here is the first known representation of what has become known as the crucifix, or the sacred veneration of the “god on the cross.” Here are all the elements, the cross shape of the structure and a figure placed upon it seeming to be hanging in possible joy or anger or possibly in pain.

However, this find dates back to some 9800-10,000 years before Christ and is just one of the many dramatic discoveries at the place that archeologists are now calling “the world’s oldest temple.” This “cross” is among many objects referred to as “t’s” by those conducting the investigation of the site, only first uncovered in

2007. All the “t’s” seem to have some form of symbolic representation carved on structures (images, totems, possible pre-writing). They have been laid out in what appears to be great circles similar to a “henge” such as Stonehenge. However, this one object pictured above appears to be the only “true cross” figure at the site, at least revealed to the public as of yet.



Gobekli Tepe viewed from outside of the site.

The finding of Gobekli Tepe and the determining it as a site of worship, and one that was sacred for millennia, is having shock wave effects on our understanding of the past. Historians are saying Gobekli Tepe changes our entire conception of how civilization came about. However, some of the findings must also call into question our entire understanding of modern religions and how they came about as well; particularly this one object found that closely resembles the Catholic symbol of the crucifix.

We clearly have evidence through ancient Persian and Phoenicians and particularly ancient Egyptian religions, tracing a symbol like the crucifix back long before the time of Christ, but now we see the possibility of tracing the sign all the way back to the very foundations of religion, or at least the latest find that currently mark what we think may be the foundation of religion. (or at least now placed through Gobekli Tepe as almost 10,000 years before the traditionally stated time of Christ.)

Now some would immediately say

- This just must be coincidental and there can be no relationship between this object and the Christian crucifix. This is not a man upon the cross but

an animal, and clearly a lion. And besides was not the model of the cross as the symbol of Christianity developed based on the Roman execution of Christ in a standard Roman means of killing in the time of Christ; nailed on a cross?

And at first glance, and with limited understanding of the belief systems and capacities of the Ancients, their points could be valid. However, in looking at this object from the possible view of the Ancients, the connection can be made, since after all, to the Ancients the sky was the best the source for a great deal of knowledge and this object could directly be linked to the worship of the sky. (The sky also seems to have been the best form of entertainment around and became the basis for many of their legends, which led to the basis of religion.)

To understand the possible connection between this object and the Christian symbol, we must have an understanding of the concepts of Archaeoastronomy (also spelled archeoastronomy) which according to Wikipedia “is the study of how people in the past “have understood the [phenomena](#) in the sky, how they used phenomena in the sky and what role the sky played in their [cultures](#)” see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeoastronomy> Archaeoastronomy projects that the Ancients spent great deal of time concentrating on the heavens and knew a great deal about the movement of the sky, especially in relationships to the rising of the sun in relationship to the stars at the times of the solstices. The most famous location that shows the Ancients studied the skies is the already mentioned Stonehenge in the United Kingdom.

- We have finally come to understand ourselves that Stonehenge is a site designed to measure the year and determine when the solstices will occur. It is now projected by many historians that the occurrence of the solstice was the cornerstone of the religion of the people of the time.

In recent years dozens of smaller and large “circles” have been found across Europe and West Asia, and they too are now also recognized as “hengese” or ancient astrological observatories

The Archaeoastronomy field clearly states that the ancients knew a great deal more about the sky than just the annual calendar, including what we today call the “Great Year” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Year This “year” is what we know as the 26,000 year or so (more precisely some 25,765 year) cycle where the solstices seems to pass through “ages” or “houses of the sky” spending some 2000 year in one “astrological house” and then the next, seemingly to pass in retrograde through the twelve great constellations. The affect as observed on the Earth (or at least the northern part of the Earth) is in fact accurate and real, and the apparent movement does occur, but not based on the “movement of the stars” but based on our different view of the heavens from Earth caused by the slight wobble that is involved in the Earth’s rotation.

The fact that the Ancients did know this cycle is quite amazing. We have written records of the Babylonians division of the sky into eighteen “houses” from some 4,000 years ago, and the tracking of the movement of many events, including the solstice and comets “through the houses”.

- It should be noted that the modern “twelve houses” based on major constellations were all present in the Babylonian construct, its just they added a few more “houses” by dividing some of the constellations a bit more than the more “modern” reading of the sky, first developed by the Greeks. Therefore, within the Babylonian astrology, there was an Aries, and a Taurus and also a Leo, et al.

Archeoastronomy researchers have shown that many of thy Ancients were fully aware of the long drawn out “migration” of the Great Year and were able to establish means even prior to writing of passing the knowledge along to one generation after the next.” The Mayan calendar is perhaps the most famous manifestation of these people’s knowledge of the “Great Year”; but “the year” was clearly observed and felt important by a great many cultures all over the Northern Hemisphere. There are over three hundred known ancient and relatively modern cultures that seemed to been somewhat independently aware of the “Great Year” and this cycle had major influence on their cultural myths and “universal understanding.

- Most of these societies saw the time of transition between “houses” of the solstice as a time of great social and political change, the ending of one age and the beginning of the next. (Thus the dire predictions of the near future based on the Mayan recognition of the end of one age and the beginning of another ... and based on our names for the sky bodies, the ending of the age of Pisces and the beginning of the Aquarian age.)

The supposed time of Christ, was precisely one of those time, as the “month” of Aries (the ram) of the Great Year was ending, and the age of Pisces (the fish) was beginning.

- Here is possible the origin of some of Christ’s titles “the Lamb of God”, and the basis of his “disciples” as the “fisher of men.”

In addition, for the first two hundred plus years of the Christian movement, the symbol of the religion was not the cross, but the fish or Pisces. The switch to the cross only came as the Christians incorporated the symbols and festivals of the rival religions, especially the symbols of many sun god religions, as a means of gaining followers without denouncing existing practices. For example the 25th of December had longed been celebrated as the birth day of several key gods, including Mithras and the Sol Invictus (the all conquering sun) and in the mid third century CE, became the day to celebrate the birth of the Christ..

And once in power, the “new” Church seeing giving power to the stars undermined the power of the one and only god (and his son and holy spirit, did all it could to break up astrology and the knowledge of the Ancients in this area; as did Islam in land they conquered. Thus much of our understanding of what the Ancients knew in this area and how it affected their religions was lost to us more moderns.

- It is in this lost understanding that lays the major connection between the Christ figure on the Cross or the Lamb of God on the cross at the ending of the age of Aries, and the lion on the Cross at Gobekli Tepe, for the time of Gobekli Tepe was clearly in the age of the “month” of Leo, who’s symbol is the lion.

If we accept that the Ancients had a great understanding of the transition of the sky”, then it would not be difficult to see that the veneration of the lion at the time of Gobekli Tepe as something possible or even expected; just as the lamb was the object of veneration in its age and the bull in Taurus.

- Archaeoastronomy shows that much of the major religious activities and symbolism in the Ancient world was focused on the sky and in particular events connected to the “Great Year.”

One of the most accepted connection is the prime symbol of one of the great rivals of Christianity; Mithraism. The savior god Mithras is portrayed killing the bull (representing the end of the “Month of Taurus” and the beginning of the “Age of Aries.”) The focus on the bull as the sacred animal during what would have been the age of Taurus is well documented among many cultures of that time, and so was the transition of having the new focus of sacrifice and veneration become the lamb or sheep during the two thousand years leading up to the time of Christ. (As, perhaps represented by the story of the conflict over the golden calf during the Exodus process. In addition the Greek story of Theseus killing the Minotaur may also be related to the ending of the Age of Taurus.)

Mithras is always depicted looking away as he slays the bull. This is thought to represent him looking into the next age (Aries) while ending the previous (Taurus). This seems to place the foundation of Mithraism around 2000 BCE, We can trace him back to that time period through the Indian god Mitra, and in ancient writings of Mesopotamia in 1500 BCE, and legendary struggle with bull fits into the transition period between Taurus and Aries.



It also fits into the great epic poem of the time *Gilgamesh*, in which the hero must confront the “great bull of Heaven.”

In addition, part of the Mithraic liturgy was something so close to Christianity it becomes clear that much was taken from this religion by the Christians besides the birth date of the savior. For the rituals of Mithras included

- “He who will not eat of my body, nor drink of my blood, so that he may be one with me and I with him, shall not be saved.”

Again, Gobekli Tepe, this site of worship, as it is being projected to be, has rocked the world of history. No one thought that such sophisticated art and design as well as symbolic representation possible for the time period (some 2-3,000 years before the rise of agriculture and some 6000 years before the “pyramid age” of Egypt) These people were still in the hunter-gathers stage of development yet created and maintained Gobekli Tepe for millennia and appear to have had an extensive religious process and surplus enough to supported both an artisan and priestly caste. No historian really thought such a thing possible prior to the rise of agriculture. Yet here it is. (How much more will be found in the 90% of the site not yet excavated?)

This site is just one of dozens of places found in the last decade that has forced us to greatly reconsider our conception of both the rise of civilization and also of religion. Catalhoyuk, a prehistoric settlement 300 miles from Gobekli Tepe was among the first of these great new finds that began to restructure our thinking of the past. When it was first found most archeologist and historians were shocked from the dating the site to about 7000 BCE, and Catalhoyuk was labeled as the “first city.” But now, only a decade or so later Gobekli Tepe is found and we are pushing things back some 3000 years more. In addition archeologists have

found “settlements” in Israel that have been dated back to some 12,000 BCE. But no site found as yet in this new round of discovery is so well preserved as Gobekli Tepe; nor, no other site is filled with such spectacular works of art.

The reason for the preservation is also amazing. It appears that after a few thousand years the site was abandoned, but only after a “proper burial;” the evidence suggests that the people who had used the site (or the latest generation of those using the site), covered up the whole area. This respectful preservation of the centers of worship has provided us with a location untouched by war and looting and in an almost pristine condition; the site looks almost as it did at the time of its use.

- Here again based on the premise of Archeoastronomy we can speculate why the site was abandoned. For after several thousand years of use the site was no longer aligned with the “sky”, and therefore lost its importance. However, since it was sacred for so long, the people buried it well.

With this back ground and with some better understanding of Archeoastronomy, we can again ask the central question of this piece; can one of these “t’s” at Gobekli Tepe really be the initial Crucifix? Since there is no writing and only speculation upon the meaning of all the various finds and symbols, it is difficult to fully say. However, we can lay down the foundation for the speculation by recognition of the knowledge of the ancients of the sky and its “movements” even at this early date; something not considered possible, that is prior to the finding of Gobekli Tepe. If we need to reconsider our concepts, why not look at if the lion on the cross as really a “god on the cross” or if not ... the origins of the “god on the cross” so sacred to so many religions.

And based on what we have know from the past, the speculation about the lion on the cross is far from groundless, for example we know that the symbol of the cross and more particularly the “god on the cross” was not originated by the Christians, and is very ancient.

- According to J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols*, p.45, , "Cross--A universal symbol from the most remote times; it is the cosmic symbol par excellence."

Through the Sumerian deity Dumuzi, and as he was later known in the Akkadian and Babylonian pantheon as Tammuz, we see the cross as a sacred symbol in some of the most early civilizations. Some very ancient art shows this god portrayed in a fashion that looks more like a late Roman Catholic Bishop, carrying a cross; although the piece is dated back some 3-4000 years before Christ.

Tammuz / Dumuzi



In addition, the process of worship of this god included the use of water to place a cross on the forehead of the worshiper and festivals similar to Easter.

The resurrection of Tammuz was celebrated in an annual lamentation that involved washing with water and anointing with oil.

Also this ancient religion included a hope for resurrection for all persons not just the god.

'When those who lament, men and women, come up with him to me,' said one Akkadian text, 'may the dead arise and smell the incense.'

And we know the rituals were practiced well into Biblical times for we read in the Old Testament.

The annual lamentation of Tammuz is described by the ancient Hebrews in the Old Testament: 'Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz' (Ezekiel 8:14). <http://www.control-z.com/czp/pgs/descending17.html>

We also know that well before the Jesus story, there were literally some dozen or more gods whose representations have been found in a form completely similar to the image of Christ on the cross, some dating back at least 1500 years before the supposed time of Christ.

Presented here are just four of these ancient images:



Fig. 0



the 3rd



- The top left is Ba'al from Carthage, roughly 400 BCE
- The figure on the top right is a very ancient Egyptian image of Horus (at least 1500 BCE)
- First figure on lower left is the Greek God Bacchus from the 3rd Century BCE
- The lower right figure is an Early Greek representation of the Sun (5th Century BCE)

Therefore, the whole story of the death of Christ as a new or even actual event and on based on Roman execution can be called into question (and has been for centuries by those in the later Roman world, then in the Age of Reason and now in modern times.) The story has been called by such as Thomas Paine, in the late 18th century “as a rehash of ancient myths” as has many classical writers and modern researchers. The only defense that the Christian Churches have given for the similarities to the Christ story and the other stories is that the Devil

had created religions for “man” that would be so similar to the “true” story of Christ, to confuse “man” into not believing in the true savior.

We also know that the symbol of the cross was long considered in the Ancient world the sign for everlasting life, as is the promise of the crucified Jesus. We can trace both the symbols and the promise as far back as written language allows us to do (in Egypt and in Sumer.) and we have the folk myths that go back far greater into the past.

The worship of Horus is far older than Tammuz with the possible date for the origin of worship going back some 7-8000 years.

Horus was called: Resurrected One; 'Iusa', the 'ever-becoming son' of 'P'tah' or 'the Father'; 'the Way, the Truth and the Light'; 'Messiah'; 'Son of Man'; 'Son of God'; 'the Word'; 'the Word made Flesh'; 'Holy Child'; 'God's Anointed Son'; 'Word of Truth'. Horus was called the 'KRST', or the 'Anointed One', long before the title was given to Jesus.

Osiris was called Lord of Lords, King of Kings, God of Gods; the Good Shepherd; the Resurrection and the Life; Eternity and Everlastingness; the god who “made men and women to be born again”. <http://www.control-z.com/czp/pgs/descending17.html>

And the key symbol of Horus the Egyptian cross called the Ankh, the symbol of “eternal life” see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ankh>. Speculation about its design include it being based on several different parts of a bull, which would possibly align the creation of the cult to the beginning of the age of Taurus (about 4000 BC).

So we can trace back the cross and the hanging “god on the cross” back several millennia. Now we see at the site being called the first temple, Gobekli Tepe, numerous objects that seem to be the center piece of the structure what the archeologist are calling “t’s” and at least one that clearly looks like an outright cross. And on this cross is the representation of the astrological house in which the solstice of the time would have occurred. We have the right based on these facts to at least speculate that this new find that is challenging the time line of “civilization” should also challenge the origins of our religious symbols of today. .

Without written language or other means of knowing, it is clearly not possible to directly state that the “lion on the Cross” is the precursor of the “lamb of God on the cross” However, based on the long history of use of “gods on the cross,” dating back well before written language, and based on the concepts of Archaeoastronomy, the notion can not simply be written of, either. We need to consider what to some would be obvious and to some only coincidence as not only possible but possibly likely.

However, there is one clear step that could be taken to better determine the possible connection between the “lion on the cross” with the modern crucifix; conduct the research to determine if the openings to the circles at Gobekli Tepe are in fact inline with the solstice in the age of Leo.

This type of exam has been conducted for Stonehenge, and most of the other new henges discovered in recent years, all with positive findings for the alignment for the openings of the sites and the sky in the “age: they were constructed. No such test has been conducted at Gobekli Tepe as of yet. If and when it is done, and the findings do show an alignment with the age of Leo, it can go a long way towards explaining the abandonment of the site, the religion of the time, the knowledge of the people of the time, and if this “lion on the cross” was more of than a coincidence or really the new oldest representation of a “god on the cross” dating back some 10,000 years before Christ.

The Ba'al Theory of Christianity

Book One Ba'al, the Jews, and Christ --- How the old Rituals of the Canaanites Became the Core Belief of the Christians



**How the Rivalry Between The Cult Of Yahweh And
The Worshipers Of Ba'al
Helped To Create Christianity ---
And Religious Intolerance in The Western World.**

- A Blending of Political and Cultural History with Religious History

By - Glenn Young, Enthusiastic Amateur Religious Historian

Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled Ieoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.

(Ezekiel 16:20,21) And you took your sons and your daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and made them pass through (the fire) to the idols.

Micah 6:7: “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

Hebrews 10:10-12 “. . . we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ . . . But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

1 Corinthians 5:7 “. . . For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”

Sacred Executioner. Thus a story based on fact, by being interpreted in a way consonant with ancient sacrificial ritual, may actually take the place of that ritual, and function in such a way that it is as if the ritual were being perpetually performed.

The best example of this is the case of Jesus, whose death was interpreted as the sacrifice of a man-god, the placation of an angry father-god and the expiation of otherwise unpardonable sins; the blame for the shocking but necessary sacrifice was borne by a whole nation, the Jews (though crystallized in the individual form of Judas), who were given the role of a collective Sacred Executioner.

Hyam Maccoby, *The Sacred Executioner*
<http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

Preliminaries

Part I - Design of Site

In attempting to create this work so that it was understandable to most people, I felt the need to provide an extensive introduction that covered a wide range of concepts and ideas; primarily I was hoping to enable the reader to have a shared understanding with me of how so much of what we think we know in history is actually untrue and extensively impacted by the dominant religious beliefs of our times, and of the past. My editors said "Sorry, people will just not stand for one hundred pages of background before you get to the point."

So we reached a compromise that can only really be achieved by the fact that this work is being placed on a web site rather than a more traditional book. And here is how it works

I am keeping the lengthy but I consider important introductory essays on the site, but in a separate optional section. I do urge you to read them, before the books, but, that is your option.

I have taken some critical points that my editor feels are in these essays and place them in a section between the preface and the introduction of Book One; this section is called "definition of terms" which actually deals with a bit more than the just definition of some terms.

I will make reference to the more complete explanation of the terms found in the relevant introductory essays found in the tab labeled as such.

In addition, there is a need for the reader to have an overview of the events of the time and their sequence and their distance from each other (something quite important but not often well understood by casual readers of history). Therefore, again, apart from the main body of the books, but something that is quite needed to be reviewed by the reader is a time line dealing with the development of religion, as well as the rise and fall of critical states involved in the story line.

This time line should be reviewed and when needed by the reader used as a reference point to help maintain an understanding of the issue of "time" in the explanation of the concepts presented in these books.

Therefore inserted in the text are some time lines, and in addition there is a separate section of the site with a timeline.

Therefore this site will contain the following sections

Table of Contents

An Executive Summary of the Two Books

Introductory Essays

Timeline of Critical Events

Book One – Ba'al, the Jews, and Christ --- How the old Rituals of the Canaanites became the Core Belief of the Christians

Book Two – Ba'al as Both Savior and Devil

A Power Point Version of the Executive Summary

A Blog and Feedback section

Thank you for exploring with me this past and I hope you have the recognitions of the connections to the present that has motivated this work.

Also at this point I should add a little about myself. While I do have academic training as a historian, (undergraduate degree) I represent myself not as a professional historian but as an enthusiastic amateur religious historian. Independently, I have studied the great classics of history and both the traditionalist and the radicals of history of the world. I have extensively traveled to visit ancient sites; I have even stood on the ruins of Troy and sang out Homeric verses to the sea (much to the amusement of my companions and tour guide.)

However, my main line of study was government and politics. Part of this training was in economics and research design. My career involved an extensive amount of creation and management of research. This and many other things allowed me to create a “macro” view of events and look for the connecting issues that are often left out by persons in the field of history; they often tend to look at the “micro” issues of their specialty (often the subject of their PhD). While in theory there is nothing wrong with the micro, the problem comes for some historians to create a grand vision to help explain how their micro fits into the macro. I have the training and the time to create this macro view.

In addition as a non-professional historian I have no “credibility issues” or universities to which to answer. Therefore I am far freer to speculate than the professional historian. This is not meant as a criticism of either them or me, only a statement of why I can explore “the possible” while many others the field of history can not. So much of the changes in the field of history (as well as other fields) have come from the macro views of the enthusiastic amateur. Also, some of the most crack pot ideas ever also come from the enthusiastic amateur. Hopefully I fit into the former group.

Therefore I offer these concepts the possible as best guesses, since so much of real evidence has been destroyed and not just as another goofy guy’s view of the past. For more on my “route of travel” in reading and study to obtain the assertions presented in these books, please see Introductory Essay 2.

Preliminaries

Part II - Preface

In Western tradition there is a sign over the entrance to Hell that says:

- “Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter Here”

I ask the reader to abandon, not all hope, but all pretense. Please read this work without inclusion of religious views about what is a “fact” and what is “accepted by faith.” Enter here with an open mind and an understanding of Bob Dylan’s line that:

- “... not much is really sacred.”

Remember that modern day archeology and linguistics (as well as computer science) has brought us much closer to understanding the world of the Ancients and the Classical period, free of religious bias and “forced beliefs”. This new knowledge has brought about a much deeper respect for the knowledge and the capacities of Ancient peoples. Forced history based on literal interpretations of the Bible kept people from realizing that the civilizations of the Ancients were, in fact, far older and more sophisticated than we had come to expect. Now, with the freedom to discover more and more of this ancient world, we find ourselves constantly rethinking our views of “current beliefs” and “concepts of history” in general, as well as, the history of religion itself.

Maybe another Dylan line works well here –

- There are no truths outside the gates of Eden.

And while this book may look like just another effort at a deconstruction of Christianity, it is far more than that. It is really an effort to look at the Phoenicians, an almost forgotten people of the Ancient world. Far more ancient than the Romans or Greeks, we explore the tremendous influence the Phoenicians had in their day and we trace the continuing impact they have on our world today. For the sake of brevity and focus (since there is really so much to tell) this book specifically looks at how the Phoenicians influenced our current religious viewpoints.

- In addition, Book II of this series will attempt to explain much of the chaos and mass killings in the modern world, as well as throughout the history of the Western world, as eventually linked to the ancient struggles between the concepts of the Phoenician religion, and those of Jews of the time. We focus especially on the impact these struggles had on the Christians over the centuries.

Both books attempt to link changes in religion to changes in the political dynamic of the time, and to look at how “crisis” in the state becomes manifest in “revelation” in religion.

Therefore, these books need to cover a great deal of history and will often read as more of a review of Western history than some readers might want. However, I ask the reader to bear with me. I believe this close historical support is needed because:

- First of all, I will attempt to do what most efforts of this kind do not do, to link the political and military history of the time to the development of religion, and again, this link is done from the perspective that “not much is really sacred.”

- Of course I am not the first to test these waters, however, I will attempt to go beyond what, for example, Richard Elliott Friedman did in his ground breaking work, *“Who Wrote The Bible?”* I will attempt to look at not just the history of the Biblical times but at a far longer and deeper history as well.
- There was also a great deal of literature created in the early 20th Century showing the connection of Christianity to “Pagan” religions, most of which has long been forgotten, but has been built upon by others. I build on this to include what seems to be missing; a link with the religion of the dominate people of the time, the Phoenicians.
- Second of all, I am showing the relationship between political crisis and religious development. Without the knowledge of the political crises and the history of the time, an understanding of the religious changes becomes more difficult, if not impossible. And lastly,
- I am combating centuries of forced beliefs by a religious and political system that tried to eliminate knowledge of the past for fear of losing power in the present. Christianity, by basically eliminating as much of the history of the world prior to its advent, or manipulating history portrayed in the Bible to their own ends, has created a world that still debates the timing of the flood and creation. Many of my “modern” contemporaries continue to ignore the billions of years of world history, never mind the extensive history of humans in the last 20,000 years.

It is only through this elimination of the “sacred” and the linking of politics and cultural changes that we can begin to understand the “winners” and “loser” in the arena we call “the sacred” or more simply, religion. I wish to ask the question of why Christianity became the main religion of the West and perhaps provide a reasonable answer. In addition, I hope to shed some light on the true and real conflicts between what became Christianity, and what was Judaism of the time.

Because there is a need to blend so much together in such a small place (the confines of these books), this is not a highly focused book. I am attempting to cover a wide range of subjects and history to show the reader how and why I reached the conclusions stated. There is however, too much to cover and keep this book of a reasonable size. Rather I attempt to establish some kind of common knowledge base so that this work will make sense. since I believe that much of the “commonly held” history of the “world” is often “wrong;” and based on religious needs rather than “historical fact,” I need to present a great deal of the history that is really based in these facts, and not in religion.

Often, I will make reference to other books, and to help the reader needs at least understand the evidence and concepts presented in these books. Much of what I present here is built on the concepts, data and facts found in these books. However, in an effort to make this work more accessible for people, instead of relying on the traditional use of lengthy foot notes, that are usually associated with this type of writing, I will use the more modern tool of the internet, and its websites for much of my documentation, giving sites that readers can access with little trouble.

So how ever you view history, and what ever are your current religious views, please, share my exploration and reach your own conclusions, but do so with that open mind. I hope the journey is challenging, but exciting. And, remember;

The kingdoms of experience
In the precious wind they rot
While paupers change possessions
Each one wishing for what the other has got
And the princess and the prince
Discuss what's real and what is not
It doesn't matter inside the Gates of Eden

Bob Dylan

NOTE – As we move through the various sections of these books, I will refer to many quotes from the Bible to confirm my premises; a good portion of several books of the Bible (including Kings, Chronicles, many of the Prophets, Palms, etc) could be used to prove the points. Obviously, I can not use all relevant quotes. Therefore, I apologize in advance if I do not use what others may consider “the best” example, or if I don't use all potential quotes ... The quotes included are just meant to justify the arguments to some degree, without overwhelming this work with Biblical citations (although at times, it seems that I need to do just that).

If I could not quote the Bible at all in this book, I would prefer it. Not saying that it is not a useful source for this time period, but I am saying that what ever quote I do use, I'm sure others will find better quotes or interpret the quote I use differently. I don't want to make this work a discussion of how to interpret Biblical quotes I am trying to use these quotes as a means of show the progression of thinking of the people of the time, and to justify the conclusions I have drawn.

Preliminaries

Part III - Jesus and Ba'al

Much of these works depend upon showing a strong parallel between the Jesus and Ba'al. As will be shown throughout the work, and as one of the main premise of the writings is that Jesus is a "morphed" version of the story of the very Ancient god Ba'al (who is a retelling of the god Bel, who is a retelling of an earlier god, and how much of Zeus is another retelling of Ba'al, etc.)

However, since these are primarily historical and not religious works, I am placing much of the demonstration between the similarities of Jesus and Ba'al here, upfront. Some of the more relevant parts will be treated with more details in the main texts. However, the controversial nature of the claim needs to have some highlight early and on its own.

- It should be noted that all the points I present have been denounced and attempted to be debased by many a Christian writer. However, they have not disputed the findings only the meanings of the findings of these ancient writings.

The core of this work is not really a discussion of if Jesus existed at all; which has been extensively debated for centuries (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus-myth_hypothesis), but how much of the overall Jesus story is similar to other myths (for a far fuller description of this area see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ_in_comparative_mythology . As seen in these sites and extensive other literature, it has long been noted at first by the Romans, and then later by such great thinkers as Tom Paine and all forms of modern societies (and many political movements) that the Jesus story is a retelling of far more ancient stories. In fact, that part of these books is neither new nor, outside the strictly fundamentalist religious world, even controversial. Even looking at the relationship between Ba'al and Jesus is not all that new.

It was and still is the prime Christian answer to the similarities between Jesus and dozen of other "death and rising gods" that all this was a plot of the Devil to deceive mankind; so when the real savoir came along, he would be rejected as a copy rather than the real thing. I will go into this Christian defense later, as part of the history of the thing, but just let it be known that even the earliest of the Christians saw the similarities and felt the urgent need to provide an answer.

- However, what is new here is looking for the link between the core of Christianity, beyond just the story, but the intended meaning of the Christian stories, and what I call Ba'alism.

This link and its consequences are what is novel in my writings and is seldom raised in other type of efforts at linking (such as the the lack of the mention of Ba'al in Wiki site mentioned above)

However, within the findings and translations of ancient Canaanite and pre-Canaanite scripts we begin to see some links made between Ba'al and Jesus; for example:

In a 1921 edition of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, a scholar named H. Zimmern claimed a find of "stage-directions for a sort of miracle-play" performed at the temple of Bel-Marduk (i.e., Baal) annually. In this play, Baal was alleged to

- have been "bound and brought before the tribunal which awaits mankind on the bank of the river of death."
- He was scourged,
- condemned to death, and then led away to a prison-house.

Another "malefactor was led also away to execution," while a second one was released.

Once Baal was put in prison, "the city was plunged in confusion" and his clothes were stripped from his dead body.

- A goddess then washed away blood that had flowed from a "wound in the side" of Baal; and
- Eventually he rose from the dead after his followers lamented.
- A parallel is also alleged in that Baal "descended into hell" and was welcomed by the other spirits.

(This story was found in cuneiform script dating back at least 1000 years before Christ.)

In addition,

G. R. S. Mead, who in his periodical *The Quest*, created two parallel columns in which he finds over a dozen parallels between Jesus and Baal based on this text. (See <http://www.tektonics.org/copycat/baal01.html>)

A slightly updated version of this list was printed in a magazine in 1965

A Bel myth—Jesus myth parallel table created by George R. Goodman and presented in "Easter" in *The Freethinker* of May 14, 1965.

The Bel (Baal) Myth Parallels to the Jesus Myth	
The Bel (Baal) Myth	The Jesus Myth
(1) Bel is taken prisoner.	(1) Jesus is taken prisoner.
(2) Bel is tried in a great hall.	(2) Jesus is tried a great hall—the Hall of Justice.
(3) Bel is smitten.	(3) Jesus is scourged.
(4) Bel is led away to the Mount (a sacred grove on a hilltop).	(4) Jesus is led away to Golgotha.
(5) With Bel are taken two malefactors, one of whom is released.	(5) With Jesus two malefactors are led away; Barrabas is released.
(6) After Bel has gone to the Mount and is executed, the city breaks into tumult.	(6) After Jesus is executed, there is an earthquake, the veil of the Temple is rent, the dead rise from their graves and walk among the living.

(7) Bel's clothes are carried away.	(7) Jesus's clothes are carried away after soldiers cast dice for them.
(8) Bel goes down into the Mount and disappears from life.	(8) Jesus disappears from life into the tomb.
(9) Weeping women seek Bel at the Tomb.	(9) Weeping women seek Jesus at the Tomb.
(10) Bel is brought back to life.	(10) Jesus is resurrected—rises from the grave/Tomb.

NOTE: This table is patterned after a table by George R. Goodman presented in "Easter" in *The Freethinker* of May 14, 1965.

<http://sites.google.com/site/religionsciencevsfaith/home/the-assyrian-and-babylonian-bel-myth-parallels-to-the-christian-jesus-myth>

In more recent times, with greater understanding of ancient text and better translations of the Ba'al stories, others have pointed out other extensive correlations between the Jesus and Ba'al stories, including;

- Jesus descends and returns from the neither world (Hell) (For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matt. 12:40 and "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; I Peter 3:19) so too does Baal descend and return from the underworld.
- Jesus stills a storm on the Sea of Galilee, so too does Baal control the wind and weather.
- Jesus intervenes between his followers and God his father. So too does Baal intervene between the people of Ugarit and El his father.
- Jesus is depicted as King seated on a throne ruling his kingdom and giving righteous judgments: So too is Baal seated on his throne ruling a kingdom with righteous judgments.
- In the Book of Revelation, Jesus fights and kills the evil serpent / dragon. So too does Baal fight and kill the twisted serpent Ugaritic "ltn btn brh" (Litanu, the serpent or Leviathan). See [The Influence of The Canaanite Religion on The Theology of Jesus And The New Testament](#) By Harry H. McCall, CET
<http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.com/2009/07/influence-of-canaanite-religion-on.html>

This work does not claim that Jesus was solely based on Ba'al, not at all. There are extensive works that show the Jesus story was the replica of extensive other gods, including the great Horus of Egypt, which may predate the Jesus story by some 4 to 6 thousand years (based on various time lines.) Here are some of the extensive parallels between Jesus and Horus

1. Both were conceived of a virgin.
2. Both were the "only begotten son" of a god (either Osiris or Yahweh)
3. Horus's mother was Meri, Jesus's mother was Mary.
4. Horus's foster father was called Jo-Seph, and Jesus's foster father was Joseph
5. Both foster fathers were of royal descent.
6. Both were born in a cave (although sometimes Jesus is said to have been born in a stable).
7. Both had their coming announced to their mother by an angel.
8. Horus; birth was heralded by the star Sirius (the morning star). Jesus had his birth heralded by a star in the East (the sun rises in the East).
9. Ancient Egyptians celebrated the birth of Horus on December 21 (the Winter Solstice). Modern Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25.
10. Both births were announced by angels (this is not the same as number 7).
11. Both had shepherds witnessing the birth.
12. Horus was visited at birth by "three solar deities" and Jesus was visited by "three wise men".
13. After the birth of Horus, Herut tried to have Horus murdered. After the birth of Jesus, Herod tried to have Jesus murdered.
14. To hide from Herut, the god That tells Isis, "Come, thou goddess Isis, hide thyself with thy child." To hide from Herod, an angel tells Joseph to "arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt."
15. When Horus came of age, he had a special ritual where his eye was restored. When Jesus (and other Jews) come of age, they have a special ritual called a Bar Mitzvah.
16. Both Horus and Jesus were 12 at this coming-of-age ritual.
17. Neither have any official recorded life histories between the ages of 12 and 30.
18. Horus was baptized in the river Eridanus. Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan.
19. Both were baptized at age 30.
20. Horus was baptized by Anup the Baptizer. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.
21. Both Anup and John were later beheaded.
22. Horus was taken from the desert of Amenta up a high mountain to be tempted by his arch-rival Set. Jesus was taken from the desert in Palestine up a high mountain to be tempted by his arch-rival Satan.
23. Both Horus and Jesus successfully resist this temptation.
24. Both have 12 disciples.
25. Both walked on water, cast out demons, healed the sick, and restored sight to the blind.
26. Horus "stilled the sea by his power." Jesus commanded the sea to be still by saying, "Peace, be still."
27. Horus raised his dead father (Osiris) from the grave. Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave. (Note the similarity in names when you say them out loud. Further, Osiris was also known as Asar, which is El-Asar in Hebrew, which is El-Asarus in Latin.)
28. Osiris was raised in the town of Anu. Lazarus was raised in Livanu (literally, "house of Anu").
29. Both gods delivered a Sermon on the Mount.
30. Both were crucified.
31. Both were crucified next to two thieves.
32. Both were buried in a tomb.

33. Horus was sent to Hell and resurrected in 3 days. Jesus was sent to Hell and came back "three days" later (although Friday night to Sunday morning is hardly three days).
34. Both had their resurrection announced by women.
35. Both are supposed to return for a 1000-year reign.
36. Horus is known as KRST, the anointed one. Jesus was known as the Christ (which means "anointed one").
37. Both Jesus and Horus have been called the good shepherd, the lamb of God, the bread of life, the son of man, the Word, the fisher, and the winnower.
38. Both are associated with the zodiac sign of Pisces (the fish).
39. Both are associated with the symbols of the fish, the beetle, the vine, and the shepherd's crook.
40. Horus was born in Anu ("the place of bread") and Jesus was born in .Bethlehem ("the house of bread").
41. "The infant Horus was carried out of Egypt to escape the wrath of Typhon. The infant Jesus was carried into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. Concerning the infant Jesus, the New Testament states the following prophecy: 'Out of Egypt have I called my son.'" (See Point 13)
42. Both were transfigured on the mount.
43. The catacombs of Rome have pictures of the infant Horus being held by his mother, not unlike the modern-day images of "Madonna and Child."
44. Noted English author C. W. King says that both Isis and Mary are called "Immaculate".
45. Horus says: "Osiris, I am your son, come to glorify your soul, and to give you even more power." And Jesus says: "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once."
46. Horus was identified with the Tau (cross).

<http://sites.google.com/site/religionsciencevsfaith/home/horus-attis-mithra-jesus-pick-your-savior>

What is critical to this work and will be looked at in detail in several locations is the issue of something not found in most of the other god myths of the Ancient world, which is the need for the god to sacrifice themselves for "salivation." There are extensive stories of gods dying and being reborn, and seem linked to the issues of crops and the changing of seasons. However, in this issue of sacrificing for salvation, at first look, the Jesus story is relatively unique. But, with our new understanding of Canaanite religion and myth, we now can see the clear link between Jesus, sacrifice, and Ba'al. We also see that this section of the Jesus story is also not unique and does in fact date back thousands of years before Christ

We see it in the story of the God Cronus, who is El to the Canaanites and the father of Zeus to the Greeks and the foundation of much of Classical religion of the West.

Here we see the story

Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war

beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.

Or in a time of crisis, God sacrificed his only begotten son.

Here is the similarity that we will greatly explore, and here is the issue that creates such conflict between the people who become the Jews, and the peoples who become the Christians. Here is the untold story of how Christianity is more the continuation of the tradition of the “Canaanites” rather than the continuation of the “Hebrews.”

To understand this similarity we need to understand the role of child sacrifice in the Ancient world; especially the world of the Phoenicians/Canaanites; we need to see its importance in such events as founding cities or creating “covenants.” We also need to understand how influential this need for sacrifice was in the religion of the Ancients, and how long it really lasted and how wide spread it was (through to a great deal Phoenician influence). And we also need to understand the attack on this institution of child sacrifice made by the people who became the Jews and most of the “Classical world” and the resistance to these changes.

Much of the first book concentrates on the knowledge we have on extent of the practice and the events that lead to the ending of overt sacrifice and the replacement of the overt with the morphed version called Christianity. Much of the second book looks at the various morphed types of actual human sacrifice that continued in the world in the name of Christianity.

Through these understandings we come to see that there is much Ba’al in Christ and there is far more “Ba’alism” in Christianity than there is Judaism in Christianity. Once again, these evaluations are made based on historical events and not religious debates (which are of course historical events also); looking at how the politics and wars of the times influenced and was the leading cause for changes in religions as opposed to how religions was the lead in changing cultures.

Preliminaries

Part IV Definition of Terms

This is not really a traditional definition section. Here, I discuss many critical terms used in the book and this section should not be glanced over but read with real interest prior to the main text of the two books. While this work contains a great many terms that may not be familiar to the reader, or terms that may have more popular meanings than the ones presented here, I must limit the definition section to a few critical concepts relevant to the major theme of the books. This section will cover many of the overarching concepts involved in the books, but unfortunately leaves out many potential problematic terms; for many of these terms not included in this section I have references built into the text.

Part III – A - What or who is Ba'al?

Since a great deal of this work is focused on the issues of what I call “Ba'alism” I should explain that the term Ba'al in its original language can be used for:

- A particular god (the storm god of the Canaanites) who is a highly important god in the Canaanite pantheon, with El named as the chief god; or
- A title for any god or ruler or noble (the way “Lord” is used in English) or
- A collective term of “Ba'alism” in a not too precise manner as a reference to the complete religion of the Canaanites --- such as Hindu is used to refer to the pantheon and practices of India.

As with all religious structures, in Ba'alism there are extensive and complex mythologies and rituals that for the most part will not be explained in great detail.

The main focus of Book One is on the particular Ba'alist rituals that were most denounced by the Hebrew/Jewish ancient writings; “passing through fire.” This term is a metaphor for human sacrifice. I will use the term, Ba'al or Ba'alism mostly in the third manner, the overall religion, except where specifically pointed out as reference to the storm god, or a title. (For more background on Ba'al please see Introductory Essay 2, and for Ba'al's evolution into the Devil please see Introductory Essay 3)

Part III – B How do I define time and peoples within time?

Designation of time, tracing events over thousands of years, is difficult for many reasons, including the concept of “in the beginning,” Many cultures make “year one” different than the Christian West, and almost all marking of “year one” is based on some religious event, or an event measured through religious logic (such as when the world started). Therefore designation of when something happened is a reflection of religious points of view. I will use the archaic BC and AD as opposed to the more correct, but by no means perfect, BCE (before the common era), and CE (common era) simply because it is the term that most readers in the West recognize. Neither of these terms (BC/AD or BCE/CE) are good, and show little respect to Islamic, Jewish, Chinese, Indian, etc, cultures who have an entirely independent point of reference for judging the “year” of events.” But “dating” events in a commonly accepted fashion is necessary, and I am writing to a mainly “Western” audience, so I will use the most commonly understood point of reference for dating, (and again, proper

historians forgive me). (See Introductory Essay 4 for more on this issue)

Part III – C How do I define given cultures?

Much of this work is based on concept of the “clash of cultures” or “clash of civilizations,” and often it is difficult to define these well. This is because no culture is really stagnant and they evolve and change over time. In addition, as the clashes take place, cultures evolve into different cultures, and older labels no longer apply. So, in dealing with thousands of years of history, it becomes difficult and confusing for labels to maintain consistency and meaning. So I have had to make decisions on ways to approach these issues, and for example, from Introductory Essay 4

I will have to speak in “generally accepted” terms rather than actual and “more correct” terms that may make things a bit more confusing. My arguments may be difficult enough!. For example, when speaking about Alexander the Great, I will refer to him and his army as representing Greece and Greek culture, which is only partly true but is mostly popularly “believed.” Alexander, of course, was a Macedonian, a kingdom north of what was considered Greece. * The Greeks themselves, considered the Macedonians as nearly barbaric (not quite as bad as the Scythians, but pretty close). (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great)

While it would be more proper to refer to Alexander and his army as Macedonian and the culture he spread as “Hellenistic” I will use the more “popular terms” “Greek Culture” on somewhat of an equal basis to “Hellenistic culture” (and, proper historians forgive me.)

When addressing one of the main groups in this story, the long history, religion and culture of what is now called the “Jews” we get into a great many problems, since they in their own history have called themselves different names in different times. The term “Jew” is not used until the 5th century BC, and actually represented (as will be shown) a relatively new religion and world outlook than the previous traditions of the ancestral line of these people that went back at least a thousand years previous.

- At times these people are referred to as Hebrews, and later as Israelites, and then Judeans and then Jews.

Each of these terms actually is linked to specific cultural groups, at a particular time in history. There needs to be clarity and preciseness in the use of the terms for each epoch. For example it is historically inaccurate to say

- The God of the Jews made told Abraham to sacrifice his son. Jews or the God of the Jews or in any way using the term Jews concerning this foundation folk story, is not valid. Abraham worshiped a god name El (same as the Canaanites.)
- The Jews were rescued from Egyptian slavery. By their own accounts they were still Hebrews at that point in history.
- Nor is it right to say the Jews or the Hebrews of the Jewish Kingdom of Judea were saved from Assyrian conquest, since at that point in history (about 700 BC) the proper term to refer to the people was “Judean.”

The term “Jews” can be only be referred to properly as the religious and cultural identity that

came to represent the population that evolved out of the Babylonian Captivity of the mid 6th BC. It is only after that point in history that we can begin to use the term “Jew” to properly relate the views and culture of a certain and distinct people. This was a culture much altered by the experience of the defeat at the hand of the Babylonians and the seventy years spent in exile in that capital city of the empire.

So at certain points in the book I will use terms that fit best or terms that can be related to best by the reader, with the understanding that the terms are meant to be precise. I will also at times use combined terms such as Hebrew/Israeli/Judeans or something similar to reflect transition of the culture over time.

Part III – D How do I reflect conflicts within a given cultural group?

At any given point, there are always divisions within a cultural and religious group. Critical to my story line are the subdivisions of those called Jews based on how they were influenced by the reforms that took place in Babylon. The groupings I use for a critical time period of the Jewish history (Roughly 400 BCE to 150 AD) are:

- The Returnees (or New Jews), and their descendants - those who went back to the “promised land” after 70 years in Babylon and established the Second Jewish Commonwealth) and later the Jewish Kingdom of the Maccabees and Herod.
- Babylonian Exile Jews and their descendants (those who did not return from exile but stayed in Babylon, and continued and expanded the reforms started during the “exile period” - as in part, recorded in the Talmud)
- Egyptian Jews and their descendants - mainly those who had fled to Egypt before or during the loss to Babylon. Though this group never fully participated in the transitions that were created in the Exile, they were later influenced by the Talmud and other teachings. And lastly,
- Israelite/Judean descendants who remained in the Promised Land after the destruction of the first Temple, and never fully gave up the older traditions that were so radically reformed by those in Exile. They are clearly shown in the later books of the Old Testament to be in conflict with the “returnees.”

Each of these sub-groups actually had different histories and different responses to the great clash of cultures that took place in core areas that we now call the Middle East. These differences in response are again critical to this story line of these books. And of course there are branches in the sub groups as well, such as with the Egyptian Jews; some of whom

- Accepted the major reforms of the Babylon Exile, with some variations, or
- Created a revised model of the system in place of the destroyed kingdoms prior to the Babylonian conquest, including the creation of a new central temple in Egypt, or.
- Clung to the old traditions and were similar to the fourth group that had stayed in the Promised Land, but this group had prospered in Egypt, and had incorporated some Egyptian concepts in to the older Israelite/Judean model of their religion.

Again, how each of these sub groups within groups responded to events led to differing

outcomes for each group.

Part III – E - How do I label events involving cultural interchange?

As obvious, with the concept of clash of cultures, there are ebbs and flows in the dominance of any given cultures. When a culture is militarily, politically and perhaps religiously dominant, other cultures tend to want to “absorb” from these dominant forces. We see it today with the “Americanization of the World.” In Asian history, various cultures that were on China’s periphery often tried to create similar societies to the “Middle Kingdom.

In addition, the new central powers also tend to take into their culture what they consider positives from the conquered or absorbed societies. These absorptions often include some infatuation with the religions (and foods) of the newly acquired places. The British mania over tea and curry after taking control of India, as well as their flirtations with mysticism are two modern examples of this process. To create terms that can be used to show this relationship and the great impacts of these cultural exchanges, I use:

- **Absorber cultures** - to primarily refer to the dominant societies at a time in which they are being emulated by “lesser” societies and
- **Absorbing cultures** - to primarily refer to the “lesser cultures” being greatly influenced by the dominant societies.
 - For more details on this concept please see Introductory Essay 10)

And as noted, in the process of cultural exchanges, the Absorber culture will often also have extensive absorbing subcultures. Depending on the success of these subcultures, the process could lead to a new hybrid culture (as in the case of Rome becoming Christian). In addition, there is a need to show how the traditions of one culture or another live on in the new dominant or hybrid cultures. Often over time the traditions fade and the understandings of the meaning and intent of the traditions are all but forgotten, but they continue in some “morphed” form. Often the rituals are very similar in form, but have completely or nearly completely different meanings in the new societies.

I use the term “cultural echo” to talk about these faded, misunderstood and often seemingly unconnected events that seem to mimic or remind us of things once very important to older societies but now repressed or forgotten. One prime example of this concept of cultural echo is bull fighting in Spain. Not everyone considers the fact that this event is related to that ancient ritual of the sacrifice of bulls to the gods. Yet the ritual of crowds gathering and cheering the slaughter of the bull and even the distribution of the meat (if only the ears) is very similar to the ancient process of the “pagan” rituals of thousands of years ago. It is all now considered a sport, not a religious ritual. However this sport appears to be an “echo” of long forgotten and repressed religion. The ritual was once considered important to the maintenance of society, itself.

Part III - F How to refer to the cultures by titles that are valid?

As noted I will use Hellenistic or Greek culture for the concepts brought in by the “Greeks” and also Romans. However, there are other players, including the Persian and Egyptian cultures and other older societies. I have attempted to clump these major cultural groups with some overall terms; especially to show the “players” in the great cultural conflicts that took

place over some 1200 years from the arrival of Persia to the arrival of Islam in this part of the world today called the “Middle East.”

The key terms used in the work to describe the cultures involved in these clashes of cultures are:

- **Classical Culture** - Which primarily refer to the world view of the Greeks and Romans.
- **Ancient Cultures** - Which primarily refer to the world view of the great empires of the Near East - Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, and of course, the Phoenician/Canaanite cultures. It also fits the minor states and the nomadic peoples of the time as well.
 - For more details on this concept please see Introductory Essay 8

The Hebrews/Israelites/Judeans appear to fit into the Ancient cultural views However,

- The Jews, once they were established as such, in certain aspects maintained much of the outlook of the Ancient cultures. While doing so, they created a different world view that competed with both the Classical view and the Ancient views as well

And in addition,

- A major player in this clash of cultures was also the Persians who had a completely new and different view from all three of these groups.

This Persian view is often forgotten but as we will see, was for most of the period, a far more important “player” than that of the Jews.

In the simplest way of describing the differences in the cultures (with so much missing) is the idea of the number of gods in the views:

- The Ancients’ view had an extensive number of gods, as does the Classicalist
- The Post exile Jews saw one god, responsible for all things (both good and evil)
- The Persians saw two gods (Dualism), with one pure good and one pure evil

And the major differences between the Ancients and the Classicalist who where both polytheist was how they saw the role of “man” or better said, “people” in relationship to the gods. Again, in a very simple and limited explanation:

- The Ancients saw that the main role of humans was service to the gods with very little capacity to work outside of the “will of God” Most cultural activities of these societies focused on the interplay of the people and the temples. Most of the literature and art of these societies were focused on the gods, and when powerful enough, the absolute rulers, who were living gods. (With this description, as noted, the Monotheistic Jews somewhat fits this Ancient world view)
 - The main purpose of education was to prepare people to serve the temple and the state as priests, scribes and tax collectors.
 - The Classicalist saw humans being able to learn and govern and master the environment somewhat independent of the gods (still with the recognition of

“fate” as the major determining factor in one’s life). One could almost say that the Classicalist “worshipped” the capacities of people more than the power of the gods. Most power in this culture centered on the state, the markets and the arts. Plays and literature tended to be about the interplay of humans influenced by the gods. These societies began to turn away from absolutism and towards what can roughly be called democracy.

- Education in these societies focused on understanding the universe and the pursuit of knowledge and the skills involved in seeking and expressing knowledge (logic and rhetoric)

The famous Greek saying of “(the goddess) Fortune favors the bold” is a Classical view that would not likely be understood by those of the Ancient world view.

In our work, we will show how these lines between cultures became blurred in some fashion. We then find interesting hybrids, such as Carthage (a major player in the events of these books). While Carthage grew directly out of the Ancient traditions, it eventually developed a government that was more democratic than any of the cities of its “motherland,” Phoenicia. As we will see over time, the power of internal conflicts in the Roman Empire led to rise of absolutism in government and with that, an abandonment of the Classical world view.

We will see how, within that Roman (Classical) society, a return to the Ancient view (as represented by Christianity) came about. As Christianity rose in power, the Classical world’s focus on humans, the potential of humans and the education of the human mind collapsed. All education in the West, under the domination of the Christians turned away from logic and focused on preparing people to be priests, scribes and tax collectors.

Please see Introductory Essay 8 for more details on these terms.

Part III G - How to define Response to Clash of Cultures?

Another important aspect of the clash of cultures, based on invasion of lands by peoples with very differing world views, is how the populations of the invaded land responded to the new comers. I have, again in a vastly too simple fashion, clumped these into four major groups

- **The accepters**, those who try to become very much like the new comers.
- **The resisters**, those who actively resist the new comers, both physically and passively.
- **The mergers**, those who seek to find a common ground with the new group by showing the similarities rather than the differences; and
- **The morphers**, or those who attempt to preserve the older culture, by retelling it in the language and terms of the new comers.

From Introductory Essay .2 –

The term “morph” is the shortened form of met*a*mor*phose which means:

- To change into a different form, substance, or state: to convert mutate, transfigure or transubstantiate

While this clumping is critical to many of the historical clashes reviewed in these books:

- The primary focus will be on the resisters and morphers among both the four groups of “Jews” outlined above, to the influx of both the Persian and Classical cultures into their world, their promised land.
- Also critical to the story is the resisters and morphers of the Phoenicians to the invasions of the Persians and Classical world into their empire (which stretched throughout the Mediterranean Sea.)

Again, within each of these groups there were subgroups, for example within the “resisters” there were “active” resisters and “passive” resisters.

- Among the Jews, the response of the “active” resisters resulted in a long series of wars and revolts against “Greek” and Roman rules with the main period being over some 300 years or so from around 150 BC to about 150 AD (with even some support to show Jewish armed resistance taking place as late as 350 AD)
- Some of these efforts were relatively successful (i.e the Maccabee revolt and dynasty) and some, while successful at first, quickly became complete disasters (such as the revolts of 66-70AD and 132-135 AD)

Among the most noted of the activist resisters were the Zealots.

And among the Jews, the most famous of the passive resisters was the group referred to as the Essenes. This group of resisters resisted foreign influences and domination through disengagement and “retreat” into remote areas. They hoped for and waited for divine intervention to overturn the invasions.

Again, the impacts of these subgroups play important roles in the overall story line presented within. Lastly,

Part III – H - How do I incorporate terms that show the impact of religious influence on our understanding of history?

As noted in the beginning of this definition of terms, I struggle in finding a term to express passage of time that is not dominated by religion (such as BC or AD, or even BCE with the Common Era still be based on the Christian time line. It is even more difficult to show “history” in a fashion that is not filled with this religious prejudice in its telling.

- Who is a heretic? Who is a Pagan? Who is an evil king? Who is a righteous people?

All these questions are based on religious bias. Our story struggles to show history from a non-religious bias is made even more difficult due to the influence of the Bible which is completely biased in its reflection of history. In addition, the Jews (of the Exile) added a new concept as part of their reforms, that of, religious absolutism.

- Religious absolutism is a system wherein the “state” or the ‘state” religion has the right to punish to the point of death, those who refuse to conform to the full rules of the religion.

This was actually a relatively new conception in religion at the time of its development. In some ways it “democratized” religion in that it held not just the kings and priest responsible for maintaining Gods’ pleasure, and more importantly, avoiding God’s Wrath; but all the people of the community were required to conform or all the community faced calamity.

- This conception was incorporated into Christianity and when that religion came to dominate the West, the idea of religious absolutism came to be dominant in the West, as well.

This concept that the religious authority had the right to kill people over religious beliefs - for the good of all the rest of the people, lead to the concept that the state had the right do so also. The state assumed the right, indeed, the responsibility to protect the state from --- the “other.”

- This led to killing on a massive scale and is referred to as -domicide (of which genocide is a sub-grouping)

Throughout the two books I struggle to show the conflict between recording of events and interpretation of them through religious views - based in religious absolutism - greatly influence our overall collective memory or understanding of these events. It is hard for me to provide terms for this, but I’ve attempted to address the issue in another fashion

There is one essay in the Introductory Essay that covers the difficulties in finding facts that are not religiously tainted. While not directly included in the introduction because it is relatively tangential to the main story line, I urge you to read in its entirety prior to taking on the main books. This is the essay entitled “The Battle of the Super Heroes - Achilles vs David. – (Introductory Essay 6).

This essay shows

- How extensive the documentation is to support the existence of the societies portrayed in the Iliad. There are archeological findings of many cities, including Troy and

Mycenae, extensive pottery, armor, and all forms of artifacts to show that the portrayal in the Iliad is a fair and relatively correct representation of the world of Achilles in the story line. And

- How the documented evidence of the society portrayed in the Bible of the Kingdom of David is virtually non-existent. That after extensive efforts over 150 years of modern archeology, there is only one item found that supports that there was ever a David (a stele from a king of Israel saying he was from the house of David), and more critical to this lack of evidence is the counter evidence that there is really no space in history for a great Davidic kingdom, when you look at the findings and records of other states that actually did exist (Egypt, Assyria, etc.)

However, we in this world and in this time see Achilles as only a myth and David as valid, actual history.

This view of history exists only because the dominance of Christianity and its mandate of absolute belief in the truth of the Bible; questioning of this mandate could be a capital offense leading to domicile. Therefore, the acceptance of David as fact is solely based on the 1500 year or so Western requirement to accept David or face death, not the real evidence of the historical record. And in addition, this capital offense was present for those who were willing to see Greek and Roman stories as facts and not just myths.

As pointed out by this essay, religious tyranny and absolutism that controlled “thought” in the West for some 1500 years still plays out in our understanding of history. This Christian religious influence is directly challenged in this book and asks the reader to look at this Ba'al Theory of Christianity on the basis of real evidence, or at least on the basis of the evidence we have left that was not completely destroyed by Christians during the authoritarian rule. In short, I ask the reader to set aside all notions of preconceived, religious dominated “history.”

Book One

Ba'al, the Jews, and Christ

How the Old Rituals of the Canaanites Became the Core Belief of the Christians

Part I - Premise: To begin with, this is not a work about religious beliefs, but a book that looks at how political and social events led to the creation of religious beliefs and rituals. This is a book about the mundane, not the sacred. This set of writings, compiled into two books, argues three basic themes:

- 1) Christianity's central notion, that God sacrificed his only begotten son to save the world, almost certainly has its sole source in the religion of the Canaanites; with its beloved god Ba'al.

We argue that Ba'al, the god portrayed in the Old Testament as the great rival god of Yahweh, who's worship was considered by the prophets as an abomination, is in fact the model for the Christ story; and Christianity is a "morphed" version of the Ba'al legend; not a "reformed" version of the Judaism; nor a new covenant with the Yahweh. While not denying other influences on the development of Christianity (Egypt, Greek mystery religions, Persian dualism, etc) we argue that at its core the basis of the Christian religion is a revitalization of the concepts of the need for human sacrifice to placate a god, a concept of a deep ancient past, rooted in Ba'alism and one repressed for only a short while by both the Jews and the Classical world, but brought back in a morphed version by a "new church" with very ancient stories retold.

- 2) We also argue that the rituals of human sacrifice so associated with Ba'al continued for centuries after the Christian triumph in Western Europe. We see this continuation of Ba'alist rituals in such events as the Auto de Fe in Spain and witch burnings throughout Western Europe. When considered from a non-Christian point of view the similarities between the ancient rituals of Ba'al and the public burnings of heretics and witches are too close to be independent of each other;

and

- 3) The justification of forced religious conformity, in fear of the wrath of God for failing to comply with "his" laws, first developed by the small Jewish colony founded after the Persian defeat of Babylonia, and then later greatly expanded under the Christian churches not only created for centuries a state of religious tyranny in Western Europe, and then later the Americas, but was the foundation for the justification for the 20th centuries state's efforts at forced conformity and justification for the mega deaths created by these states.

For greater background for on these three points, please see Introductory Essay 3.

All three of these themes are linked together by exploring how Ba'alism, in its morphed form of Christianity, became the dominate religion in the Western world

In the first book of the series, dealing with the influence of Ba'alism on the development of Christianity, we look at the origins of human sacrifice as part of the religious rituals of the ancient world; and how for some time it was considered a normal part of the religious process; including the sacrifice of the first born. We explore the great power, influence and colonization practices of the Phoenicians/Canaanites which led to the spread of this religious practice throughout Europe and North Africa. We compare this spectacular success of the worshipers of Ba'al with the slow development, and near failure, of the Jewish religion. We also explore how this nearly eliminated religion revitalizes itself and become abhorrent of human sacrifice and come to believe that the practice had incited God's wrath against them to the extent that He permitted the destruction of their nations and first temple.

We then look at the social and religious chaos that was created by the rush into the Eastern Mediterranean of Persian, Greek and Roman world views, and how they conflicted with the ancient beliefs of both the Phoenicians and "Jews" living in the area. We will see how the Jews fought against the changes in culture and religion and were nearly exterminated and how the followers of Ba'al, although defeated in arms, actually retold their story with Christ as Ba'al and eventually led to the creation of a triumphant "new" religion that was simply a morphed version of the very ancient story of the Phoenicians and Canaanites. (As well as key components from the Egyptians, Persians, Babylonians, Greeks, etc.)

Section II

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection A - Bottom Line ... Was Human Sacrifice a Real Event in Human History and How Common was it among the Phoenicians?

Before we trace the political and cultural history that led us to the conclusions of this book, we need to address the fundamental assumption. Since I am projecting that Ba'alistic rituals concerning sacrifice influenced the early Christians and their view of the death of Christ, and that the Ba'alistic rituals influenced later peoples in their concepts of punishment and Hell, I need to first establish that human sacrifice was actually a ritual of the Ba'alist religion.

- Despite extensive evidence to support this projection, the idea that the Phoenicians and their related cultures participated in human sacrifice is not a totally settled matter.

However, most major historians focused on this time period agree that the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians did use child sacrifice as a key element of their rites. The debate still rages over its frequency and in what format it may have been practiced.

In addition, most non-religious based historians now also agree that the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean peoples also participated in these types of rituals, to a lesser degree than the Phoenicians. The internal conflicts within the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean peoples over the use of this type of sacrifice may actually be the foundation for the development of what we now know as Judaism.

- While opinions continue to vary, in a series of e-mails I had with Dr. Paul Mosca, one of the key people in modern research of the religion of Phoenicia, he confirmed precisely that he, like most of the major players in his field, is of the opinion that child sacrifice was practiced by the Phoenicians, and to a lesser degree by the Hebrew/Israelite/Jewish populations.
 - Dr. Paul Mosca, of the University of British Columbia, is one of the leading researchers in the relationship between Canaanite and Hebrew development. His work focuses on the Canaanite-Phoenician-Punic religious continuum that stretches from the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.E.) down to the Roman period. He also analyzes ancient Israel's complex reaction to Canaanite culture of the Bronze Age (including outright rejection - and distortion - of Canaanite religion, on the one hand; appropriation of Canaanite literary conventions and religious symbols, on the other),

Therefore, not just based on one opinion, but on the general view of the field, we can say the answer to the bottom line question is:

- Yes, human sacrifice was a key element of Phoenician religion.

We read in the very foundation myths and stories of the Phoenicians that human sacrifice was critical to the success of the people and that, it became the tradition of the people to follow the

action of their deified founder:

It was the custom among the ancients, in times of great calamity, in order to prevent the ruin of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging deities the most beloved of their children as the price of redemption: they who were devoted to this purpose were offered mystically. For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.—Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. *The Theology Of The Phœnicians: From Sanchoniatho.* <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

This ancient statement will be referred to quite often in this book, and its meaning and relationship to Christianity will also be greatly explored.

In addition, we can determine:

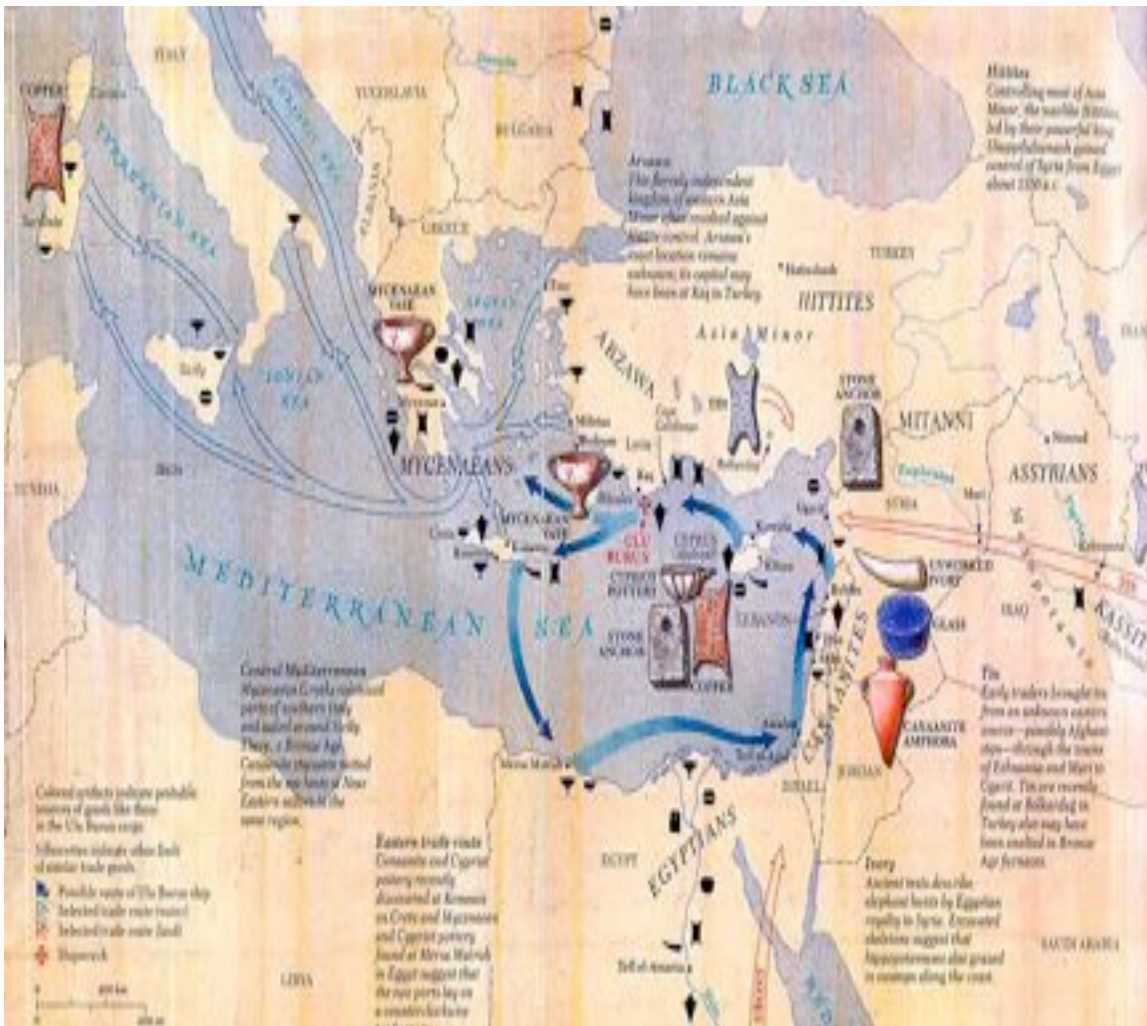
- Yes, the Phoenician influence on this rite was present within the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean community; and
- Yes, the Phoenicians, over at least a 1,000 year period, if not longer, introduced and supported the practice into large areas of the Mediterranean basin, and
- Yes, the Phoenicians maintained and supported this cultural belief, along with the rest of their religion, through a millennia of foreign domination
- Yes, despite long term military and cultural defeats, the religion of Phoenicia later, during Roman times, became one of the first great rivals of Christianity.

(And we must remember that the Phoenicians saw this practice of child sacrifice as a “positive” in their culture and religion)

In this book we will look at each of these projected positive answers, and give what documentation is available to support the positive statements. We still will need to address other issues not directly included in this list if we can justify finding the “residue” of Ba’alism in other world events, such as the Auto De Fe in Spain and witch burnings throughout Europe discussed in the second book of this series.

As you will see, there are more details to support some of these points than others; especially when we use the Hebrew Bible as a source for justification.

However, prior to exploring each of these points, there is a need to provide some more historical background on the Phoenicians, and their major colony, Carthage, and to try to place these people in a more just historic context.



<http://phoenicia.org/imgs/maps/pages/zznatuicalarchmap.htm>

Part II - The Forgotten Foundation

Section I Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection B - The Phoenicians - A Nearly Forgotten People

Today, we hardly know who about the Phoenicians. We know very little of them and their colonies, or their importance to “world culture.” However, the Ancients and Classicalists were not so ignorant. In 3 AD Dyonysius of Susiana, was paying tribute to them by saying:

Upon the Tsurian sea the people live
Who style themselves Phoenicians...
These were the first great founders of the world --
Founders of cities and of mighty states—

Who showed a path through seas before unknown.

Dyonysius wrote this verse about the same distance in time (some 1500 to 1800 years) from the height of the Phoenicians past glory as those “who showed a path” as we are from the Roman heights. But the influence and role played by the Phoenicians lasted long after their role as the “first great founders of the world” (at least in the Mediterranean world) as trumpeted by the writers of history in the classical world. They, the Phoenicians, dominated in the Mediterranean for some 1200 years and were the chief rivals of the Greeks, and then again, the Romans for some five hundred years of hot and cold wars.



Of course Phoenician culture was built on much older cultures and absorbed religion and traditions from there’s societies that stretch back at least 4,000 years before them. So while Zeus was based on Ba’al and Ba’al was based on the Babylonian Bel and so on back into the unknown past

Here is Ancient Babylonian art showing Bel fighting a Griffin which is the bases of St. George and the Dragon of Christian folklore

For consideration of how far back the origin of Christian symbolism goes back into time, please see Introductory Essay 11



And consider this may be the oldest image of a crucifix that we know – dating back some 12,000 years (Found at Golbeki Tepe in South Eastern Turkey in what is being called the world’s oldest temple.

As noted by Sanford Holst in Ifrane, Morocco on June 28, 2005 at an international conference on Ancient culture,

- “They (The Phoenicians) became a powerful and wealthy empire which stretched from Morocco to the Levant”

Dr Holst pointed out in his paper that many of the cities that exist today began as Phoenician trading centers including:

In Morocco: Lixis (modern Larache), Sala (Rabat), Mogador (Essaouira) and Tingis (Tangier); in Spain: Gadir (Cadiz), Malaka (Malaga), Ibisa (Ibiza); in Algeria: Icosia (Algiers); in Tunisia: Utica and Carthage, both now gone; in Sardinia: Karalis (Cagliari); in Sicily: Panormus (Palermo); in Cyprus: Kition (Larnaca). These were in addition to their home cities in Lebanon: Tyre (Sor), Sidon (Saida), Beirut (Beirut), Byblos(Jbail), Tripoli (Trablous), and many others..

http://www.phoenician.org/sea_peoples.htm

We really do not have an extensive amount of resources on the history of these people. The major work of the Classical world on the Phoenicians was written by Philo of Byblos, (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philo_of_Byblos) (not to be confused with the great philosopher of the relative same time Philo of Alexandria) Philo claimed his work written roughly about 100 AD, was a translation to Greek of a far more ancient text by a writer name Sanchuniathon, who life is placed roughly at the time of the Trojan war (if not before). While Philo’s writings are mostly lost (never mind Sanchuniathon’s original), some work survived through the Christian writers who used Philo’s translation to ridicule ancient religions.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanchuniathon> Through these sources, and the impact of modern archeology (and finding and translations of ancient Phoenician texts) we are able to gain an understanding of these people’s importance in history and the basis of their religious beliefs.

- I suggest that people look at the web site <http://phoenicia.org/toc.html> for a more extensive review of the history and culture of the people we know today as Phoenicians.

What the texts of Philo and the findings of archeology have enabled us to see is the massive impact that the religion of these people had on the Israelites and on other peoples. These sources also provide us with a clear link to the concepts of Christianity.

It was the Phoenicians, who's known history can be traced back 8,000 years and more, who were the main trading partner of Egypt. They also established "civilization" (city life) in Northwest Africa and, what is now Spain and France. All that was done by Greeks and Romans in these areas, in later times, was built upon very old Phoenician foundations. They too were the first to trade with Britain, developing the tin mines there. They were the first mariners to circumnavigate Africa (some 2000 years before the Portuguese).

This trade beyond the "Pillars of Hercules" seems to be settled fact in history. However, and just perhaps, the Phoenicians may have also traded with the New World. There are recorded finds of Phoenicians writings and coins all over the Americas, but this "trade" is a subject of great controversy (See *Saga America*, as one source for this argument.) And if they did trade with the New World, the Phoenicians become the likely source for the Quetzalcoatl myths of the Mesoamerican peoples <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quetzalcoatl>. If this link existed it is possible to suggest that they were also a provider of the "culture" to Mesoamericans (including the rituals of human sacrifice).

- Even without the speculation on the New World contacts, the history of the Phoenicians is spectacular. These people were "highly civilized" city dwellers and dominated the whole of the Western Semitic area, having developed a "city state culture" that was similar but much older than the Greek cultural organization during its "golden age".

The origins of these people are lost in legends (some see the people as originating in India, others in Anatolia, etc), but we do know that they were a developed culture long before the "Hebrews" existed. The peoples of the area were a major link in the oldest known trading routes that existed some 10,000 years ago which went from Jericho north up into the Anatolian plateau. We have documentation from Egypt of trading with Phoenician cities dated into the third millennium (to gain the famous "cedars of Lebanon.") It seems that the home cities were developed no later than 2750 BC, but there is strong evidence to suggest that Byblos is close to 8,000 to 10,000 years old, first being developed around 6,500 BC.. However, it is not clear that those who developed the city at that time were "Phoenicians" per say, but perhaps cryto-Pheonicians. Clearly, by 2500 BC (or 1000 years before the time of David" and 1700 or so years before the date given for the founding of Rome), the Phoenicians' fleets were reaching Spain and perhaps beyond.



(Ancient Phoenician coin showing their seapower)

In addition, the Phoenicians made extensive development in ship building and many other technologies. The later "Classical powers" of the Greeks and Romans used these Phoenician technologies as the basis for the economic development of the Classical world. (For more details on the Phoenicians see <http://www.phoenician.org/index.html>)

It also appears that they were the peoples who invented what became modern writing, or at least the writing that is the

foundation of the Western alphabets,

It was the [Phoenician](#) alphabet that spread through the Aegean and on Phoenician trade routes throughout the Mediterranean. Compared with the difficulty of writing Akkadian in cuneiform—such as the [Amarna Letters](#), from ca. 1350 BCE—the flexibility of an alphabet opened a horizon of literacy to many more kinds of people.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit>

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Phoenician alphabet in the history of writing. The earliest definitely readable inscription in the North Semitic alphabet is the so-called Ahiiram inscription found at Byblos in Phoenicia (now Lebanon), which probably dates from the 11th century BC. There is, however, no doubt that the Phoenician use of the North Semitic alphabet went further back. By being adopted and then adapted by the Greeks, the North Semitic, or Phoenician, alphabet became the direct ancestor of all Western alphabets. Only very few inscriptions have been found in Phoenicia proper; This rarity of indigenous documents is in contrast to the numbers of Phoenician inscriptions found elsewhere—on Cyprus, Malta, Sicily, and Sardinia, and in Greece, North Africa, Marseille, Spain, and other places. http://history-world.org/canaanite_culture_and_religion.htm

Hebrew, Greek and Latin alphabets were all based on the concepts developed by the Phoenicians.

- The two Canaanite branches may be subdivided into several secondary branches. First, Early Hebrew had three secondary branches—Moabite, Edomite, and Ammonite—and two offshoots—the script of Jewish coins and the Samaritan script, still in use today for liturgical purposes only. Second, Phoenician can be divided into Phoenician proper and “colonial” Phoenician. Out of the latter developed the Punic and neo-Punic scripts and probably also the Libyan and Iberian scripts. http://history-world.org/canaanite_culture_and_religion.htm

Here alone, the modern world owes a huge debt to the Phoenicians. We owe a debt in countless other ways as well. With the discovery of Ugarit and other Phoenicians cites, we know that the Phoenicians had a written history that predates the Greeks, at least 1000 years before Herodotus (the supposed father of history). They also had a complex religion dating back millennia that included the concepts of social justice, thought only to have been developed by the Jews.

- These clearly were not the minor people of history they have been projected as. They were, especially for the West one of the “big three” (along with the Greeks and Romans) and were actually the first to be in the West with culture, some 1500-2000 years before the development of Roman power.

It seems that the history of Phoenicia falls into five major time frames: Early development and independence, Egyptian “domination”, Pre Sea People/ Post Sea People, and then what can be collectively called “In the Service of and in Conflict with the Great Powers”, and then lastly subjugation to the Great Powers.

The time periods break out roughly to be:

- Early Development and Independence - 10,000 plus or minus a few thousand years – to about 2500 BC
- Egyptian “domination” 2500 to 1200 BC
- Attack of the Sea People and Post Sea People 1200 – 750 BC
- In the Service and in Conflict with Great Powers 750 BC to 325 BC
- Subjugation to Great Powers 325 BC – to present

For at least 1200 years (2500 to 1200 BC), if not for 1000 years more, the Phoenicians were more or less the main navigators of the region, being occasionally challenged by the Mycenaean Greeks. The Phoenician homeland was in the “war zone” between Egypt and the Hittites, and other Asian rivals of Egypt, and often fell under the domination of one of those peoples or another. During this first 1200 year period, the Phoenicians still played a major political role in the “Near East.”

Then, roughly around 1200 BC, what could be called the first recorded “great world war” occurred with the infamous invasion of the “sea people.” Empires fell (the Hittites, and others). Many cultures just barely survived and were greatly weakened (Egypt). However, Phoenicia was only slightly damaged by the invasion and soon recovered (while apparently losing control of a piece of land in the southern areas of their domination, soon to be known as the Philistia, or the land of the Philistines) According to Dr. Holst,

The Phoenicians ... seem to have gained more than anyone else from the mass migration of the Land and Sea Peoples. All of the Phoenicians’ powerful adversaries had been destroyed—and the Phoenician cities were untouched by this devastation which happened around them. The historical records shows these sea-traders quickly began to expand their domain by placing trading posts in Cyprus, the Aegean, Sicily, Sardinia, North Africa, Algeria, Morocco and Spain
http://www.phoenician.org/sea_peoples.htm

For the next 500 years or so, Phoenicia remained the dominant power of the Western coast of Asia and was the conduit of trade with the vast lands of Europe.

- In some ways their travels to the West were similar to the efforts of Spain and Portugal, and later England and France, in the “modern” area of exploration. These Iberian powers were blocked from developing trade by the Turks and the Italian powers of their days and so they sought other ways to establish trade and colonies by heading West (the Spanish) and South (the Portuguese).
- The Phoenicians were hemmed from expansion by Egypt to the South and the Hittites and later the Assyrians and others to the North and East. So the Phoenicians headed west, into the relative “unknown” of the time.

And much like the modern explorers, they found lands that were almost empty, but filled with things of great value and peoples who were mostly “barbaric.” Much like the explorers of our “modern age” when the new lands were discovered, colonies from the mother land were established. The most famous of these Phoenician colonies became Carthage, but as noted above, sites were established in all the major Mediterranean islands, in the Black Sea areas,

southern France and Spain, with voyages to Britain and many other points.

- The high point of Phoenician culture and sea power is usually placed ca. 1200 – 800 BC or in the period where the Near East had been terribly impacted by the “People of the Sea” and the great empires of the time (Egypt and Hittite) were greatly weakened, and the rise of the Assyrians. [Fernand Braudel](#) remarked (in *The Perspective of the World*) that Phoenicia was an early example of a “world-economy” surrounded by empires. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia>

This concept can be taken in both a literal sense of geography and also in a linear sense of being free to expand “surrounded” in time between the Hittite/Egyptian domination and the rise of the new super powers that dominated Asia after the 9th Century (the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians).

However, during this first period of power prior to the “sea people” (say 2750 BC to 1200 BC, despite Egyptian and Hittite wars for domination, these “city states” of Phoenicia also dominated what is now called the “holy lands.” We see in the Bible stories that the Phoenicians, not the Egyptian or Hittites, for perhaps more than 1500 years were the chief rivals of the Hebrews/Jews in religious (and political matters) in the “Holy Land”. While the Bible’s authors could not deny the wonder and wealth of the area and cities, (as discussed, for example, concerning the building of Solomon’s temple) the Bible’s writers talk of the Phoenicians and their religion as one that was hated by God and his prophets. At the same time, however, it appears that it was all too much loved by the Jewish masses and the Kings of both the Northern and Southern “Jewish Kingdoms.”



Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection C - The Color Purple

Moderns usually associate Phoenicians with present day Lebanon. In fact, all of what is considered Canaan, and its famed cities of Jericho, and Sodom and Gomorrah from the time of Abraham to the time of David were in fact “Phoenician” in language, culture and religion. In the part of the writings we have recovered (the Amarna tablets from the 14th Century BC,) the people we call the Phoenicians called themselves *Kenaani* or *Kinaani* (Canaanites).

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia>

Also,

Canaan (**Canaanite**: כנען, **Hebrew**: כְּנַעַן kə.na.ʔan, **Greek**: Χαναάν whence **Latin**: *Canaan*; and from Hebrew, **Aramaic**: ܟܢܥܢ whence **Arabic**: كنعان) is an ancient term for a region approximating to present-day **Israel** and the **West Bank and Gaza**, plus adjoining coastal lands and parts of **Lebanon** and **Syria**. The **Hebrew Bible** identifies Canaan with Lebanon — foremost with the coastal city of Sidon — but extends the “Land of Canaan” southward across **Gaza** to the “**Brook of Egypt**” and eastward to the **Jordan Valley**, thus including modern **Israel** with the **Palestinian Territories**. This southern area included various ethnic groups. The **Amarna Letters** found in **Ancient Egypt** mention Canaan (**Akkadian**: *Kina-ḫu*) in connection with Gaza and other cities along the **Phoenician** coast and into Upper **Galiilee**. Many earlier Egyptian sources also make mention of numerous campaigns conducted in *Ka-na-na*, just inside Asia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaan>

Also see <http://phoenicia.org/toc.html>

Therefore, all the enemies (other than the Philistines and Egyptians) involved in the Hebrew invasion of the “promised land” starting with Abraham (and Lot) and then again during the period of the Judges, and early Kings, were, in fact, Phoenician.

The Bible makes much of these long extended wars between the “Canaanites” and “Hebrews” but to the Phoenicians, they were most likely viewed as minor military events with much victory and loss for both sides. There is historical debate if the invasion of Canaan by Joshua ever took place. If it did, it might have occurred just prior to or during the wars with the Sea People, or perhaps during a time of great expansion to the West or during a time of great a struggle to survive. In any event, these “brush fire wars” with local nomads, the wars with Hebrew tribes, if they occurred at all, would have seemed like a minor problem compared with the major international events that were occurring all around the Phoenicians.

- While the wars between the Greeks and Persians and Rome and Carthage were titanic “world wars” the military conflicts with the Hebrews/Jews and the Phoenician/Canaanites were more like the local wars of the European Middle Ages. These wars seemed very important on a local level to the Jews, and to the local people doing the fighting, but they actually had very little influence on the broader world wide level of the time.
- Our focus on the Hebrew invasion is comparable to the wars of Britain’s Alfred the

Great. In comparison to the wars in East Europe and throughout Asia at the time of Alfred; his wars in the late 9th Century were less than “side shows” compared with the defense of the Byzantine Empire, the expansion of both the Arab and Turk empires, and the great wars in China leading to the collapse of the T’ang Dynasty. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%27ang_Dynasty) However, since eventually England grew to dominate the “world,” we read about Alfred rather than the history of the T’ang. Likewise, since Christianity came to dominate the “world” we read the Old Testament stories as if they were the most important events of the time, which clearly they were not, even if they occurred at all.

However, if the Phoenicians were the Canaanites and thought of themselves in that term, where did the name “Phoenicia” derive? According to Phoenicia.org

- Phoenicia is the Greek word for “purple”. The most probable reason for giving this name is the famous Tyrian purple cloth which the Phoenicians manufactured and sold to the rich of the ancient world. <http://phoenicia.org/noframe.html>

This color was the most sought after dyed cloth in the Ancient and Classical world. Their near monopoly in its development and trade was one of the main sources of Phoenician wealth.

- **Tyrian purple** (**Greek**: πορφύρα, *porphyra*), also known as *royal purple* or *imperial purple*, is a **purple-red dye** made by the ancient **Canaanites/Phoenicians** in the city of **Tyre**, from a mucus-secretion of the hypobranchial gland of a marine **snail** known as **Murex brandaris** or the Spiny dye-murex.
- The Phoenicians also made a **purple-blue indigo dye**, called *royal blue* or *hyacinth purple*, which was made from a related species of marine snail, called **Murex trunculus** or the Banded dye-murex.
- Tyrian purple was expensive: the fourth-century BC historian **Theopompus** reported, “Purple for dyes fetched its weight in silver at **Colophon**” in Asia Minor. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purple

This product was amongst the most popular items for millennia. People throughout the trade links of the Ancient and Classical world longed for it and were willing to pay almost anything for cloth that was dyed with it. Eventually steps were taken by governments to restrict the trade (since it created a trade deficit for so many locations), In the West its wearing was restricted to only the royal classes; and thus the color became associated with Empire and the imperial ruler.

- Purple has often symbolized **royalty**, dating back to **Roman** times, when clothing dyed with **Tyrian purple** was limited to the upper classes due to the rarity (and thus price) of the dye. The color, which was closer to a deep **crimson/red-violet** color... than to the modern idea of purple, was the favored color of many kings and queens.
 - **Alexander the Great** (when giving imperial audiences as the **emperor** of the **Macedonian Empire**), the emperors of the **Seleucid Empire**, and the **kings** of **Ptolemaic Egypt** wore Tyrian purple. The imperial robes of **Roman emperors** were Tyrian purple trimmed in metallic **gold** thread. The badge of office of a **Roman Senator** was a stripe of Tyrian purple on their **white** toga. Tyrian purple was continued in use by the emperors of the **Eastern Roman Empire** until the

final collapse of the [Byzantine Empire](#) in [1453](#)

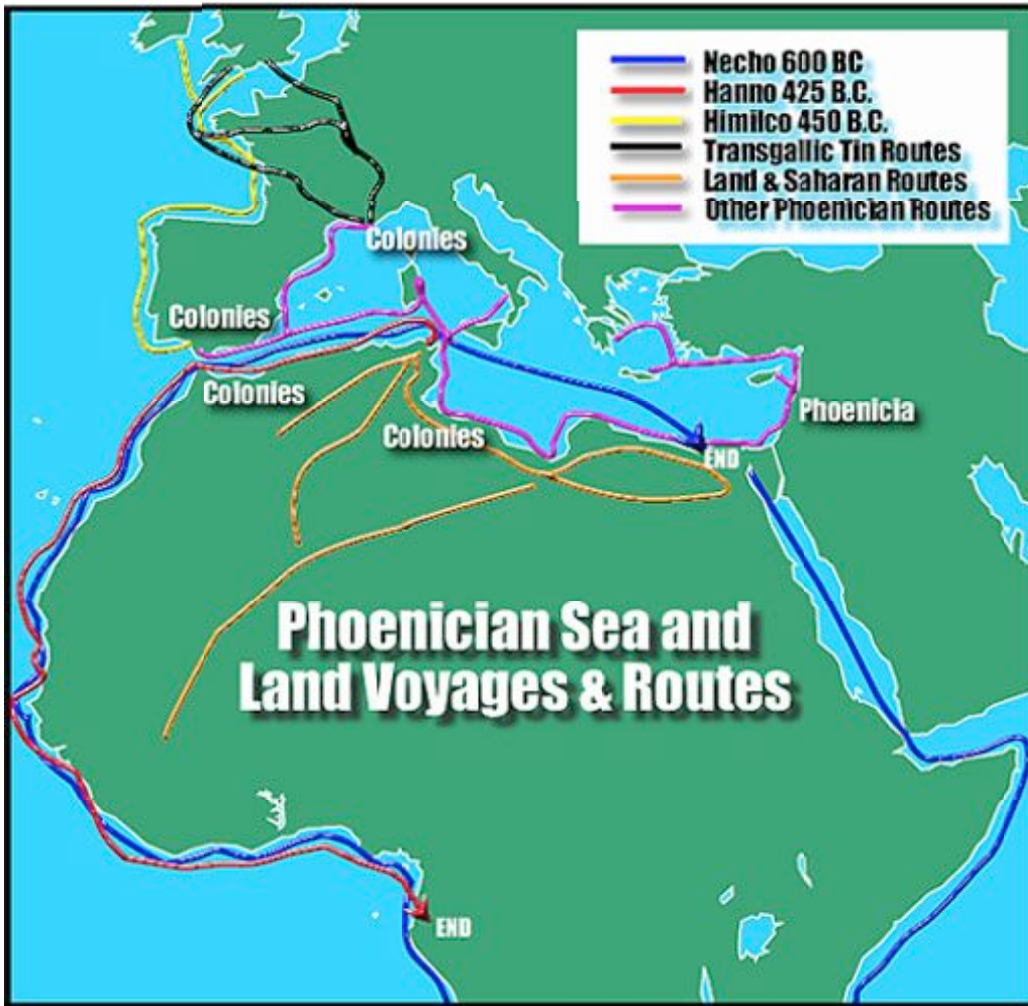
- Byzantine empresses gave birth in the Purple [Chamber](#) of the palace of the [Byzantine Emperors](#). Therefore, being named [Porphyrogenitus](#) (“born to the purple”) marked a dynastic emperor as opposed to a general who won the throne by his effort. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purple>

Myths were developed to explain the origins of this cloth and color.

- The Roman mythographer [Julius Pollux](#), writing in the second century BC, asserted (*Onomasticon* I, 45–49) that the purple dye was first discovered by [Heracles](#), or rather, by his dog, whose mouth was stained purple from chewing on snails along the coast of the [Levant](#). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purple

While the origins of the dye are not clear from at least the time of the Sea People if not long before, the Phoenicians/Canaanites were deeply involved in its production and trade. To the rest of the Ancient and Classical world, the people who brought it, this fabulous cloth, and the area where it was developed, became collectively known as the “color purple” itself.

- Recently, the archaeological discovery of substantial numbers of Murex shells on [Crete](#) suggests that the [Minoans](#) may have pioneered the extraction of Royal purple centuries before the Tyrians. Dating from collocated pottery, suggests the dye may have been produced during the Middle Minoan period in the 20th–18th century BC. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purple



<http://phoenicia.org/proutes.html>

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection D - The Impact On Iberia –



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/ESPA%C3%91AANTESDELAPRIMERAGUERRAPUNICA.T.GIF>

At a later point in our story, as we examine the impact of the Phoenician culture and its morphing into other representations, we need to remember that the Phoenicians were the first to bring “civilization” to Spain or more properly the Iberian Peninsula . For more than 1500, and perhaps as long as 2500 years, Phoenicia was the dominant cultural influence on the peoples living there. The Phoenician descendants may in fact be the great ancestors of the Welsh and the other Celtic peoples of England and Brittany, since the Phoenicians may actually be the ancestors of the Celtic peoples who moved to those areas.)

- The Phoenicians founded the colony of *Gadir* (modern [Cádiz](#)) near Tartessos. The foundation of Cádiz, the oldest continuously-inhabited city in western Europe, is traditionally dated to 1104 BC, although,.... The Phoenicians continued to use Cádiz as a trading post for several centuries... Contrary to myth, there is no record of Phoenician colonies west of the [Algarve](#) (namely [Tavira](#)), Phoenician influence in what is now [Portuguese](#) territory was essentially through cultural and commercial exchange with Tartessos.
- (The) Phoenicians also had great influence on Iberia with the introduction of the [use of Iron](#), of the [Potter's wheel](#), and the production of [Olive oil](#) and [Wine](#). They were also responsible for the first forms of Iberian writing, had great religious influence and accelerated urban development.
- The sixth century BC ... saw the rise of the colonial might of [Carthage](#), which slowly

replaced the Phoenicians in their former areas of dominion.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_Iberia

This brief introduction to Phoenician influence in Iberia will be drawn upon much later, as we look at the potential cultural links to the practices made notorious by the Spanish Inquisition. But for now, we need to continue with the story of Phoenicia

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection E - Very Distorted View

The focus of this book can not be on all the political, cultural or even trade contributions that this Phoenician culture made, in general. (There is a great deal of interesting reading in this vein at <http://phoenicia.org/index.shtml>) Specifically, this work needs to look towards the impact of the religion of these people, the Phoenicians, and how it influenced the development of Judaism and later, Christianity. In addition, to support the premise of this book, we need to see if we can connect the issues of religion to why the Phoenicians have been mostly “written out” of history.

From existing sources (which are few), we see that the Phoenicians were thought highly of by most of the contemporary Ancients, and by some later Classical peoples. These writings are few, especially when covering the periods of major greatness (3000-800 BC) However we do now have writings discovered at Ugarit (modern site Ras Shamra) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit> which we will explore later.

In general, however, in the West, if we consider the history of Phoenicia at all, we mainly use one source of reference, the Bible. And we do find the people of Phoenicia throughout the Bible. The Phoenicians/Canaanites were the “city dwellers” of the land know as the Holy Land of today when the Hebrew story begins. They were the people that Abraham found in the land promised to him and his descendants (according to Biblical history). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were in fact Phoenician cities. So early on in the Bible, the Phoenicians were getting bad press, and that bad press continued throughout the Bible’s story of the fight for the “Holy Land.”

Some 500 years after Abraham and his contacts with the Phoenicians (or roughly the equivalent time period from when Columbus sailed across the Atlantic until now), they, the Phoenicians/Canaanites are still there in the same place. Even when Aaron and Joshua led the Hebrews back into the land promised to them after 430 years of slavery and 40 years of wandering (again, at least according to Biblical history) they are still there. The war of conquest we read about in the book of Judges begins with the crossing of the Jordan and with the battle of Jericho.

However, this task of conquest begun by Joshua, even based on the history of the Bible is never fully completed, by Joshua or any of the Judges of Israel. Even in the Bible’s line of history after hundreds years of fighting, the Phoenician cities of the Northern area remained in Phoenician/Canaanite control. Cities such as Jerusalem were still in Phoenician/Canaanite hands as late as 1000 BC. In addition, whole large areas of the Holy Land promised to the Chosen people had been won by a third group of people who appear as recent invaders themselves; the Philistines – possibly the remnants of the Sea People.

Therefore, even by the Bible’s account, which is mostly not substantiated by the historical documents of other cultures of the time, nor by modern archeology, the Hebrew/Israelites controlled only the upland high countries of the “Holy Land” and almost none of the key cities. (And the cities mentioned in the Bible as ones taken, such as Jericho and Ai, are said to be

destroyed, not occupied. See ...

When the city (Ai) was captured, it was set on fire and razed to the ground, with the inhabitants being subjected to [genocide](#) - every adult male, woman, and all the children were killed in accordance with what the narrative states was “[God’s](#) command”.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ai_%28Bible%29)

For a more detailed account of the violence associated with the wars between the Hebrews/Israelites and the Phoenicians/Canaanites, see Ian Guthridge’s *Rise and Decline of the Christian Empire*

- Even more poignantly, however, the Bible also contains the horrific account of what can only be described as a “biblical holocaust”. For, in order to keep the chosen people apart from and unaffected by the alien beliefs and practices of indigenous or neighbouring peoples, when God commanded his chosen people to conquer the Promised Land, he placed city after city ‘under the ban’ -which meant that every man, woman and child was to be slaughtered at the point of the sword {Joshua ch 6 etc.}. <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/guthridge.html>

I will go into more detail on the conflicts between the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews later, but here we can clearly see that the Phoenicians/Canaanites, were not a minor people, but one of the major peoples of the Ancient world challenging for control of not only their own land, but the “New World” to the West; lands filled with “uncivilized barbarians” open to adoption of civilized behavior. No – I’m not the talking of the Americas, but the same situation of relatively empty lands of the Mediterranean basin, Europe and what is now the Ukraine. The Phoenicians were as important to the spread of Near East Culture and what has become known as civilization to these new lands in their time, as Spain, Portugal, England and France were in the spread of Western European culture to the Americas, and the rest of the world in our modern times.

Modern historians debate if there was actually an “invasion” or even an Exodus by the Hebrews/Israelis, but for now lets just state that the war of invasion, if there actually was one, had only limited success and that the Canaanites and their culture were far more difficult to conquer than as projected in the Bible. For example, using the traditional time line based on Biblical sources, Jerusalem, one of the key cities of the area, and eventually the capital of the whole Jewish nation, was still in control of the Canaanites more than 200 years after the Hebrew/Jewish invasion started by Joshua. It is therefore obvious, even based on Biblical timelines, that the Hebrew/Jews, who were primarily “rural” (or pagan, based on the original definition of that word) were not completely successful in their efforts to obtain the “promised land” after two centuries of warfare with the Canaanites.

If we perhaps view the wars of the Bible from the urbanized Canaanite/Phoenician point of view (which is not available from written sources) we could see the Hebrew/Israeli invasion as a long series of attacks by semi barbaric nomadic herdsmen upon the sophisticated, successful traders long settled in the area. It seemed that the major effort of the herdsmen was the destruction of the urban societies, and their thriving cultures.

- On a much smaller scale, the Hebrew/Jewish invasion of the Promised Land would have been viewed by the Canaanite/Phoenicians much as the Romans viewed the invasion of the Vandals, and Goths and the Franks.

Being an invading people the Hebrew were the absorbing culture in the conflict. As we read the Bible, we see that the Hebrews did absorb the culture (including the concept of kingship) and other aspects of the Phoenician religion, as we will see.

In addition, a careful reading of the Bible shows that the writers of the book were relating a 1,500 year or so struggle between the followers of Ba'al (the chief god of the Phoenicians/Canaanites – or perhaps a title for a series of different gods – more explanation later) and the followers of Yahweh, in which the followers of Yahweh were mostly losing. This is obviously not the “modern interpretation” of the Old Testament, where God leads the way to victory for those who follow his words and “commandments”.

- It seems that except for a few leaders and prophets, most of the “Jewish” people didn't follow Yahweh, or his teachings, and that most of the Old Testament is filled with “evil” rulers. We see the Hebrew leaders evolving into a more Canaanite style of rulers, to the point that they followed Canaanite gods. The Hebrews were being absorbed into the Canaanites' superior culture.

In fact, most of the Old Testament can be seen as a long story leading up to massive defeats, all justified by the failing of the “chosen people” to follow Yahweh. The Old Testament is more an account of the absorption of the Hebrews into the dominant culture than the success of the Hebrews in their efforts to stay true to their god.

- What needs to be asked here is; if the Hebrew/Jews were not following Yahweh, if they were really being absorbed, what god or gods were they following?

In reading the Bible, it's clear that the Hebrews/Israelis were almost always tempted to worship other gods, almost from the beginning of their relationship with Yahweh. Starting with the need to kill 3,000 at Mount Sinai after the Golden Calf event, the need to wander for forty years to try to create a more prepared population, the descent of the twelve tribes into disunity, with only a few successful “judges” and the creation of small failed kingdoms with kings who just wouldn't or couldn't keep the religion pure, the Old Testament is a story of failure.

Most of the kings of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms were said to have followed the religions of other gods and “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.” In addition, the kings took “foreign wives” who worshiped their traditional gods. The most notorious of these wives was Queen Jezebel (a Phoenician) who did end up being overthrown. Even Solomon and David, the two greatly idealized kings (if real or not) of the “united kingdom” had “foreign wives” who were allowed to practice their religions, despite the warnings of prophets. The Hebrews acted like an absorber culture.

The prophets, with few exceptions, were the ones who were “out of power” and often on the run from the rulers. The kings and priests (as well as the people) paid little heed to the “howling in the wilderness.” Many of the Old Testament prophets were out right killed for their efforts to “reform” or redeem” the leaders (and people) of the two kingdoms. Some were saved from death by miracles. Yet they were still not in position to influence events. Ironically, most “reforming kings” who listened to the prophets, and did attempt to impose Yahweh upon the state and the people, did not live very long (even dying in battle – unprotected by God?) It seems that the “evil kings” lived far longer than the “good kings.” But again, this is tending away from the main story line.

Right up to the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, the prophets were bewailing the fate of the Jews because they were practicing the rituals of Ba'al in the city, while the troops of Babylon battered the walls

2nd Chronicles Chapter 36 verse 14

.. the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem, and

[Jeremiah](#) 32.35: And they built the high places of the Ba'al, which are in the valley of Ben-hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire Mo'lech; which I did not command them, nor did it come into my mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

It is this human sacrifice, this passing through the fire, that the Judeans were conducting that, according to the Bible, was the direct cause of God's willingness to destroy the nation and punish the people. In the very next verse it says

Jeremiah 36:

- And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence;

So these foreign kings – here the Babylonian, earlier the Assyrian, later the Persian king, are actually (unknowingly?) the instruments of God, hurting (or helping) the Jews as part of God's will. Good example of geo-politics and spin in the Ancient world.

But, then again, more on this later And there is much more. If we read the Bible as the story of the "losing side" throughout much of its writing, it explains many events, that seem odd to us, such as the Isaac "sacrifice" and what happened to the first child born to David and Bathsheba.

But the key point here is that like the Romans and Greeks, the Jewish writers were biased against the Phoenicians and their culture. The writers of the Bible were not in a friendly mood toward Phoenicia, their culture and their pantheon of gods, including the one that is of most interest in this book Ba'al. One would not expect anything different from a millennia and a half of conflict.

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection F – The Geo Politics of the Times

Despite the pretense of the Bible, the real challenge to the Phoenicians did not come from the Hebrews/Israelis/Jews, with the ranting of their prophets and the two minor kingdoms that they developed in the Canaanite lands. The real threat came first from, the Sea People, then later, over centuries of time, the growing super powers of Asia, and finally the growth of Greek and Roman Power in the East.

- The centuries of the conflicts resulted in some of the most heroic efforts of any peoples in the Ancient world to maintain their freedom, rivaling if not surpassing the heroics of the Greeks in Greek/Persian wars. From the resistance mounted to survive the five year siege by the Assyrians and the thirteen year siege of the Babylonians, the Phoenicians were able to survive. However, they would find themselves on the “losing side” in what could be call the first two “world wars” of Classical history.

These events (between the first Assyrian attacks and the end of the second of these “world wars”) actually cover some 700 years of history, almost twice as long since the founding of the first English settlements in the new world. In addition, these conflicts eventually led to the major cultural collisions that impacted all the religions of the Ancient world, and continue to affect us in the modern world today. Therefore, we can legitimately say, that we are, after some 2300 years since the fall of Phoenicians to the Greeks, still trying to resolve the impacts of that war.

While there is little space here to talk about the wars of Assyrians and Babylonians against the Phoenicians, their successful resistance to these great powers has little relative impact, other than the fact that Phoenician culture survived, damaged but still striving. (This is unlike the Assyrians impact on the Israelites – i.e. the complete loss of ten lost tribes and the Babylonians’ impact on the Jews i.e. the destruction of the first temple and the seventy years of the “Babylonian Captivity”).

The two “world wars” lost by the Phoenicians, which led to the loss of power and also changes in culture, were;

- First, approximately 170 years of conflicts between Greeks and Persians that began with the Greek revolts in Asia Minor. These led to the Persian invasion at Marathon, the defeat of the second Persian invasion and eventually to the victories of Alexander the Great roughly between 500 BC - 330 BC http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian-Greek_Wars
- Second, the roughly 120 year Roman and Carthaginian conflicts known as the three Punic Wars. (264-146 BC) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punic_Wars

We, in modern America, if we know much about these conflicts, tend to know more about the Phoenician/Carthaginian role in the Roman/Carthaginian wars than we do about the Greek Wars. Some Americans may even relate more to Carthage (as I did) than they do to the Romans. Historically, Carthage was somewhat like the United States of the Ancient world, as

it was the colony that eventually outdid its mother country, and became the wealthiest of nations (in its time) promoting trade and commerce throughout the known world. In addition, most Americans know at least that Hannibal took the elephants across the Alps. (Also military students must study the tactics of Hannibal as a basic part of their study.) In some ways the Carthaginian/Roman conflict was like the United States/Soviet Union conflict, only in their time, the more “socialist” Rome won out over the more capitalist Carthage.

However, most Americans who are aware of history know of Marathon and Thermopile (more so now with the movie “300”) and of Alexander the Great, (with the recent “Alexander” movie, too), but are not aware of the role of the Phoenicians in the Greek/Persian struggles. Their role was, in fact, critical, as it was mainly the Phoenicians who supplied both Darius and Xerxes with their navies. It was mostly a Phoenician navy beaten at the battle of Salamis, (480 BC) which led to the second invasion’s failure and crashed the hopes of Persian dominance of Greece.

- In the Persian fleet at the right flank was the very powerful Phoenician fleet, which had Mount Aegaleo on its back; on the left was the Ionian fleet (with the Carians on the edge) while in the center were ships from Cyprus and Cilicia. The main effort was probably to be taken by the Phoenicians, who were intended to encircle and trap the enemy fleet http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Salamis

(The victory of the Greeks’ navy against the Phoenicians, based on the world view of the Phoenicians and their naval skills, was seen, in its time, as something like the destruction of the “Death Star” in Star Wars – totally unexpected, incredible and against the odds. The “force” must have been with [Themistocles](#).)

In one of the great ironies of history, one of the first major successes against Carthage by the Greeks at the Battle of Himera in Sicily actually took place on the very same day as the battle of Salamis http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Himera_%28480_BC%29 . The stars truly must have been against the Punic peoples on that day.

Winston Churchill, in one of his most famous speeches (among many) said in London on November 10th, 1942, at the “Lord Mayor’s Luncheon” following the victory at El Alamein in Egypt:

Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

The combination of the two Greek wins off the coast of Athens and in the plains near Syracuse (Sicily) was actually “perhaps the end of the beginning” for the Phoenician world. It would be some 150 years more before Tyre would burn, some 280 years before the last real hopes of Carthage were destroyed in the field of Zama (near modern day Tripoli) and still another fifty or so before the final destruction of the Carthage. But the Greeks were secure in both their home land and in the key colony that enabled them to compete in the Western Mediterranean. The wins also protected the small and insignificant, newly formed republic up the Italian coast that would grow to be the eventual victor in the West, Rome.

In addition, for hundreds of years, prior to, and for the years of these two major “world wars,” there were “colonial wars” and a “scramble for Europe” (as opposed to the relatively modern “scramble for Africa” among the European powers in the late 19th Century). These conflicts

were initially with the Greeks who were the rivals of Phoenicia for colonies and trade in the whole of the ancient (Mediterranean) world. Much of Greek great folk stories (cultural myths or legends) involved a retelling of the early efforts of the Greeks to break the Phoenician trade monopolies. (Jason and the Argonauts were Greeks breaking through to the Black Sea for the first time and later the Argonauts end up at Marseilles and many other places in the Western Mediterranean on their very wayward journey back to Greece.) (For how these legends were connected to trade, see <http://members.tripod.com/~sondmor/index-4.html>)

Later, despite the success of the colony of Carthage, the Greeks did manage to supplant Phoenicians in much of the Eastern Mediterranean, and (mostly, but not exclusively, after Himeria), also gaining southern Italy (Magna Gracia) and the area that is now Southern France. The Greeks fought with Carthage for almost a hundred and seventy years for control of Sicily, but could not defeat them there, and by 307 BC, except for Syracuse itself, had mostly lost control of the island to Carthage, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicilian_Wars , And Carthage maintained its control of all the major islands of the Western Mediterranean during this time including Corsica and Sardinia (Rome, within one hundred years later, would triumph in the places where the Greeks had failed.)

Therefore, for more than 1000 years (from 1200 to 150 BC), there were almost continual competitive conflicts between the Phoenician/Carthaginian and Greek/Roman cultures over both trade and control of land and colonies. It is not hard to understand why the Greeks and the Romans had little good to say of the Phoenicians. As stated in Wikipedia

The historical study of Carthage is problematic. Due to the subjugation of the civilization by the Romans at the end of the [Third Punic War](#), very few Carthaginian [historical primary sources](#) survive. There are a few ancient translations of [Punic](#) texts into Greek and Latin, as well as inscriptions on monuments and buildings discovered in North Africa. However, the majority of available primary source material about Carthaginian civilization was written by [Greek](#) and [Roman](#) historians, such as [Livy](#), [Polybius](#), [Appian](#), [Cornelius Nepos](#), [Silius Italicus](#), [Plutarch](#), [Dio Cassius](#), and [Herodotus](#).

These authors participated in cultures which were nearly always in competition, and often in conflict, with Carthage. The [Greeks](#) contested with Carthage for [Sicily](#), for instance, and the [Romans](#) fought the [Punic Wars](#) against Carthage. Inevitably the accounts of Carthage written by outsiders include significant bias. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthage#Settlement>

Herodotus, the “father of history” goes so far as to say that the Phoenicians were the root cause of all the wars between the “East and West” as they were the ones who started the women stealing with the mythical abductions of Io and Europa, which led to Helen being stolen which led to the Trojan war ... etc. ...

- According to [Herodotus](#)' rationalizing approach, Europa was kidnapped by [Minoans](#) who were seeking to avenge the kidnapping of [Io](#), a princess from [Argos](#). His variant story may have been an attempt to rationalize the earlier myth; or the present myth may be a garbled version of facts — the rape of a Phoenician aristocrat — later enunciated without gloss by Herodotus. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europa_%28mythology%29

By the way, Europa, the name of the Phoenician princess stolen and raped in revenge for Io, is, according to Greek tradition, the origin of the name for Europe, and therefore all persons who consider themselves Europeans trace their cultural name back to Phoenician origins.

- Also, according to the ***Aeneid***, the Latin epic poem on the founding of Rome by the survivors of Troy, the Roman/Carthaginian conflict is rooted in the suicide of the jilted first queen of Carthage by the eventual founder of Rome.

These wars between the Greeks and Phoenicians and the Romans and Carthaginians/Phoenicians were long and bloody events. They were duals to the end with little quarter given. The most famous episode was of course the (217-203 BC) campaign of Hannibal in Italy (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannibal>) Perhaps this is so memorable because Hannibal crossed the Alps with elephants (though only two or three actually survived the crossing). We tend to forget the details of the Roman revenge. Even after the final defeat of Hannibal at the battle of Zama (202 BC) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Zama, and the stripping of Carthage of all its wealth, after the second Roman victory over Carthage, its very existence was seen as a threat by many powerful leaders of Rome (much like a defeated but not ousted Saddam Hussein was seen as a threat by many in the US in recent history).

If you think we have some “right wing” war mongering politicians today, Rome could outdo most of ours with little trouble. Cato the Elder http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cato_the_Elder was so unhappy with the economic recovery of Carthage after the second Punic war he began to claim that the only “sure defense” against Carthage was to destroy it: *Carthago delenda est!* -- Carthage must be destroyed! was how he ended every speech in the Senate (on any subject) and, for more than a decade, was his farewell salutation to any and all. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthago_delenda_est) He eventually got his wish in 146 BC with the complete and utter destruction of the city that ended its 650 year history. (For discussion on the legitimacy of this story about Cato see <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0009-8353%28193403%2929%3A6%3C429%3ATAAFOC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O>)

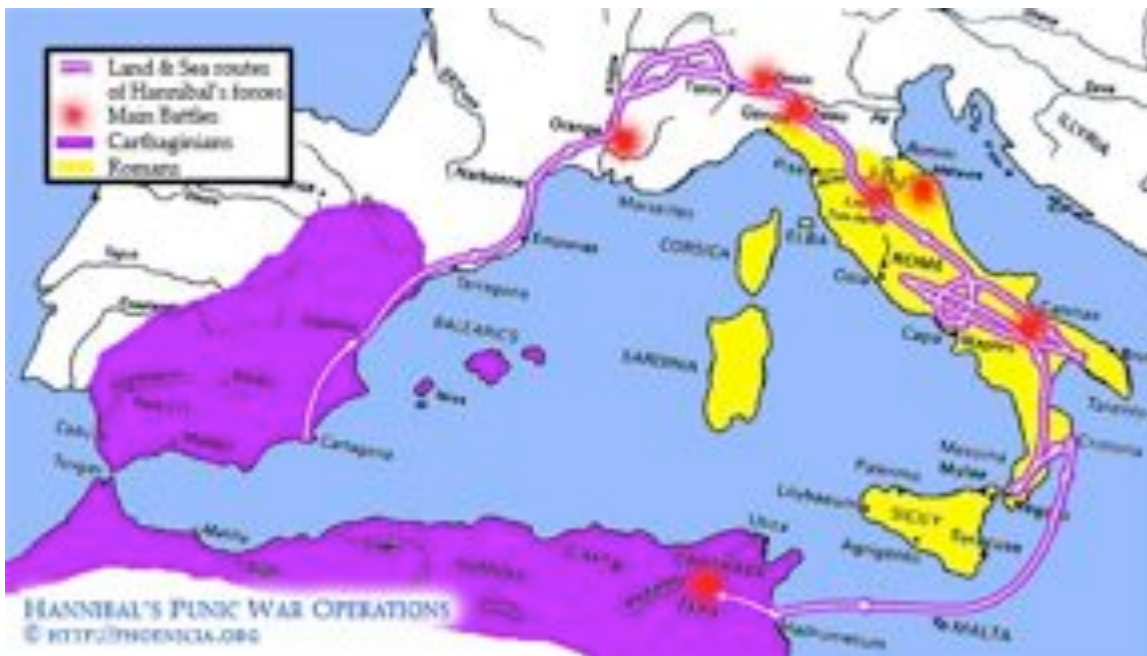
The Roman historian, Tacitus <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacitus> in his writings on the Roman General Agricola, *De vita et moribus Iulii Agricolae*, quoted a rebel leader about Roman conquests, who said “they make a desert and call it peace.” <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Tacitus> When Carthage finally fell, the Romans obliterated it and, at least by tradition, sowed the ruins with salt, so no city could ever again occupy the ground. Of course, the Romans themselves built a new Carthage about 100 years later. However, the Roman tactic of destruction clearly does not aid us today in our attempt to understand the culture, and more importantly for this book, in knowing the religion of Carthage. Almost nothing really remains of Carthaginian writing (plays, philosophy, science, medicine, etc.) Rome was very complete in its efforts.

- Imagine if you will, that the United States lost the “Cold War” and the Soviet Union occupied America, or, if the S had won World War II. What literature or histories or art from the pre-war periods in America would have survived? The founding fathers would have been eliminated from history or their story “Stalinized” to promote them as revolutionaries that fit the model needed for the new rulers. Definitely none of the literature, science or art associated with Jews would have survived if the s had won. Presumably nothing associated with concepts of free markets or capitalism would have

survived if the Soviets had won. Now, take that concept and multiply it several fold, and this was the fate of Carthage and its records of itself.

The rival that had come so close to destroying Rome (under Hannibal) and had fought so long and hard found the true meaning of “Roman peace.” In the end, after a three year siege, some 150,000 Carthaginians were killed during the sacking of the city, and more than 50,000 Carthaginians, who did survive the final siege, were sold into slavery. These numbers do not include those who died of disease and starvation during the three years of resistance. Perhaps the total was some 250,000 dead or enslaved, with the city and all its history, art and wealth destroyed or stolen. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9061910/Third-Punic-War> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Carthage_\(c.149_BC\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Carthage_(c.149_BC))

- To put this in perspective, the death in Carthage took place when the total population of the Mediterranean region may have been no more than 25 million. Therefore, we are talking about 1% of all the people in the total region being killed in this single siege of Carthage. This was no small event. (See <http://www.worldhistorysite.com/population.html>)



<http://phoenicia.org/imgs/maps/pages/hannibaloperationsnrouts.htm>

The fate of Phoenicia was no less dramatic. After some 2500 years of power, Carthage’s “mother land” lost power and influence over time as it just did not have the population base needed to compete with the rising super powers of its day (Assyrians and Babylonians) However, it did not “go quietly in to that good night.” Its dominant city, Tyre, survived a five year Assyrian siege (724-720 BC) and from 586 to 573 BC, and a thirteen year siege of the Babylonians (perhaps the longest siege in Ancient history).

- This siege occurred just after the campaign in which Babylonians took Jerusalem. The Babylonians encountered only a few months of resistance, and destroyed the first

temple, and the Kingdom of Judah, sending the Jewish leadership into the famous “Babylonian captivity” (587 BC). So, while the Jews lost, and almost slipped away into history, the Phoenicians survived.

As a settlement or peace treaty of a sort, the Phoenicians eventually accepted hegemony of the Babylonians and later, with the coming of the next “super power” entered into a similar agreement with the Persians. Both these land based empires used the navy power of the Phoenician city states for “mutual benefit” (except, of course for Salamis). Also as part of the agreement, the rule of the super powers over Phoenicians was relatively light.

While Phoenicia was no longer completely independent, the Persians and Babylonians made no effort to change the local culture or religion of the Phoenicians, and preferred to use them more as allies rather than subjugated peoples. As stated, the Phoenician fleets played major parts in Persian control of the Aegean Sea, and its efforts to repress the Egyptian and Ionian revolts (the Greek cities under Persian rule along what is now the western coast of Turkey)

- It was support by Athens for these revolts of Greek cities and Aegean Greek islands that was the justification for the Persian invasions starting with Marathon. There must be some irony in the fact that this “support of a revolt” justification is very similar to the premise that George Bush used to promote attacking Iran (Persia) in early 2007.)

This relative “freedom” for Phoenicia was not the case with the next conqueror, Alexander the Great and his “Greek culture.” One of the main themes and the justification for Alexander’s attack on the Persian Empire was to gain revenge for the multiple Persian invasions of Greece and the burning of Athens. Also, he was seeking revenge for the repression of the Ionian peoples during their revolt against Persia. As noted, in both of these events the Phoenicians played major roles. Yet just prior to the arrival of Alexander, one of the key cities of Phoenicia, Sidon, was destroyed after a revolt against later Persian rule (in 350 or 345 BC see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenicia>

Alexander measured out the “punishment” to Phoenicia accordingly. Tyre, relying on its usual tactic of retreating to the island fortress that composed most of the city, and using its fleet to feed and protect itself, expected to survive another long siege. However, Alexander was heading east, and Phoenicia was relatively near the beginning of the effort, not near the end of the “line of march” (as with the Persians and Babylonians) but near the beginning. He needed to secure his flanks and to make sure that the Phoenician fleets would not cut off his supply lines or ferry an attacking force towards Greece while he was heading East to meet the main Persian armies.

The taking of Tyre was a matter of desperation for Alexander, and he took desperate measures to take the city. With the support of a fleet from Cyprus, to keep the Phoenician fleet at least occupied, Alexander had his men build a “causeway” to the island. When the roadway was destroyed by a Phoenician attack, he simple had it rebuilt. To the amazement of (most likely) of all the Ancient powers, Alexander and his army in 332 BC took Tyre relatively quickly after an eight month siege. During the sacking of the city some 7,000 Phoenicians were killed and some 30,000 persons were sold off into slavery. To complete the revenge, the city was made “Greek”, by bringing in new people to live in the ancient city, along with most of the Phoenician home base.

Almost all of what we could have had on the history of the Phoenician dominated areas was

lost with Greek (and later Roman) efforts to make “the world over in their own image.” The cities of the area of Phoenicia were rebuilt in Greek and Roman fashion, they were repopulated with Greek speaking people and the Greek style of life was imposed on what remained of the Phoenician people. Unlike the previous “rulers,” the Babylonians and Persians, the local cultures were repressed by Greek rulers not often overtly, but repressed none the less. Furthermore, newly conquered people (at least those still alive and not slaves) were encouraged to participate in the introduction of Greek religions, philosophic training schools, and other aspect of Greek public life. Art and culture changed, as did writing, and the ability to read older writings. Until recently, the 20th century, that is, we had almost none of the Phoenician writings for their 8,000 year history, and what was available was almost completely undecipherable (since the language had been mostly forgotten).

While the term “Phoenicia” remained intact and the concept of a Phoenician people remained throughout the Roman/Byzantine era, the term seems to have been eliminated during the early Muslim rule beginning in the 650’s AD and even beyond, when yet another major cultural change came about (after nearly 1000 years of Hellenistic rule). See <http://phoenicia.org/index.shtml>

A number of historians ignorantly claim that Phoenicia ceased to exist in 64 BC, when it became part of the Roman world. However, official records indicate that in 425 AD Phoenicia Prima was subdivided into two provinces, [Phoenicia Maritima and Phoenicia Libanensis](#) by the Romans. Further, excavations of at Tel Kadesh (158 BC) in Israel as well as the witness of Saint Augustine (400 AD), Church Councils of Tyre (449 & 515 AD), the Fall of Phoenicia to the Arabs (640 AD) and the honorary living title “**Metropolitan Archbishop of Phoenicia Maritima**” which Lebanese bishops continue to carry are a few of many solid proofs that Phoenicia and its people live on despite the misinformation

We still call England, England, even though the Angles have long since ruled. (and despite conquest and occupation by the Danes, and Normans). Ancient names persist despite change in cultures and rulers.

Part II The Forgotten Foundation –

Section I - Looking at the Impact of Phoenicia

Subsection G – A Second Reminder of Our Limited Sources – An Example of Bad Press

The Greeks, and later the Romans, were the winners in the struggle with the Phoenicians and their “children”, the Carthaginians. So, who wrote the “histories” of the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians? The Greeks and the Romans did, and as we have seen, prior to the coming of the Greeks and Romans, what remains of the history of Phoenicia, primarily comes from their rivals for land and religious dominance; the Hebrews/Israelis/Jews. Therefore, after centuries of war, it makes a great deal of sense that these “Punic” peoples have been either greatly eliminated altogether from the history of the world by their rivals or remembered only as “evil.” The Hebrews/Israelis/Jewish writers (in the Bible) greatly added to this “historical view” of these people, and offered a portrait that was even worse than the “Hellenes” since, as we will see, the Hebrews/Israelis/Jews saw the religion of the Phoenicians, and the rites of that religion as the main source for God’s wrath against the Hebrews/Israelis/Jews. And since the Bible, in the Christian world, became almost the sole source for history of the time, the Jewish views of these people over time with the coming of the Christian era, became even more important than the writers of the “winners” of the wars (the Romans and Greeks).

- For a long time our primary source for Canaanite religion was simply the presentation of it in the Old Testament. This treatment, as is well known, is of a polemical nature, and can therefore not be expected to give us an objectively correct picture of the religion. http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2053

The Bible would describe the people of Phoenicia as wealthy and a source of technical support (as in the building of Solomon’s temple), but a people not out of reach of the power of God.

- **Zechariah 9**
3 - Tyre has built herself a stronghold; she has heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets.
4 - But the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea, and she will be consumed by fire.

Also, in the Bible there are several places in which the command of God is for the outright slaughter of the Canaanites, and death sentences for Hebrews/Israelis/Jews who would dare practice the rites of the Canaanite, intermarry, or make a covenant with the people condemned by God.

Deut 7

- 1”When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you,
- 2and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then

you shall utterly destroy them; You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

- 3"Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.
- 4"For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.
- 5"But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

Lev 18

- 21 " 'Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.
- 24 " 'Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. 25 Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. 26 But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, 27 for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. 28 And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.
- 29 " 'Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. 30 Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.' "

Lev 20

- 1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Say to the Israelites: 'Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. ... 4 If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, 5 I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.

Such tirades in the Bible, combined with the great losses of the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, and the effort to eliminate them from history (*Carthago delenda est!*) complicate matters to say the least. As I've already stated, we know so little in general about the past, and now we can see that what we do "know" is actually mostly "tainted," since what remains was written by the "winners." How can we trust anything we read about the time?

So, until the early 20th century, when whole Phoenician cities were unearthed by modern archeologists, (see **Ugarit** (modern site **Ras Shamra**) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugarit> and their libraries "decoded", the only written sources of the "glory" of ancient Phoenicia, were small pieces of Herodotus, some mention in Flavius Josephus, small pieces of a history written by Philo of Byblos, and, mainly, the Bible. But, once again, the writers of the Bible as noted were also either engaged in or remembering the long term struggle with the

Phoenicians, which even preceded the fights with the Greeks and Romans by perhaps 1,000 years.

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Subsection A Was Human Sacrifice Extensive in the Ancient and Classical World?

Prior to answering the question about human sacrifice among the Phoenicians, we need to put the answer in context, by asking a few preliminary questions. Was human sacrifice conducted by the Ancients and Classical Peoples? And if so --- how did they do this act? How common was it? Did it occur with some frequency?

One again, to try and answer these questions, we need to rely on the limited information from citations that we do have. However, from what we know, we can safely say that the act of human sacrifice in human culture was not only actually conducted, it appears to have been seen as needed and a respected practice.

- However, why these acts took place has been analyzed by cultural anthropologists, and explored in detail in such books as the *Golden Bough* <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/frazer/> and *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*, but is beyond the scope of this book.

But we can say that based on these studies human sacrifice did take place extensively in very ancient times, as well as in classical and modern times. (For a more complete study of human sacrifice in general, please see Nigel Davies, *Human Sacrifice in History and Today*) The reasons for this practice seem to fall, broadly speaking into three major categories.

- 1) To support a dead ruler, or person of great renown (king, priest, etc.) in the next world (mass burials of the court and consorts, or slaves) as practiced in China, Egypt and in Sumer that we know of for sure (as well as in some African cultures well into the 19th Century);
- 2) Winning favor with a god or gods ... gaining help, most notably in a time of crisis, or in getting ready to go to war, or in time of drought (The person sacrificed was often seen as a messenger to the god to plead the case of the people in need, or simply as a gift to the god); more of a one time boon to the god for a particular action, rather than long time support.
- 3) Establishing, or maintaining a contract or covenant with the god or gods, for either current or future events, or to gain the god or gods as the arbiter, or official witness of a contract or covenant between rulers. (Think of it as kind of a gift to solidify the agreement or some times, a series of sacrifices as long term annual payments for on-going divine support to maintain order or prevent the fall into disorder.) This type of sacrifice was often used at the establishment of a city or when a people moved into a new land, and also as a means of payment for rain and good crops.)

These three areas are basically the same that are used in the general practice of sacrifice with things other than humans. However, in most developing cultures where sacrifice was part of the religious practices, human sacrifice was always seen as the “highest” and most important type; the one most often reserved for the most important concerns of the society. In the Bible, the term often associated with the “passing through the fire” was “[olah](#)” which was

the sacrifice that was completely burnt and not shared or eaten by anyone (as opposed to other sacrifices which provided food to priest and people alike) was “completely burnt.”

- The term “olah” was translated as *holókauston*, or holocaust, in the [Septuagint](#), the Greek language version of the Old Testament. We will have much more to say about this term in the second book of this series.

By looking at these three main types of sacrifices we see that the concept of the role of “sacrificing of the child or other human” is different from the “dying and rising God.” The worship of the resurrected god is mainly associated with the annual cycles of crop growing. (God dies in the dry season, and rises again to bring the rains and new life to the world.)

- People worship the god who “dies and is resurrected” in many cultures, but human sacrifice to this god is not often associated with this process. The rites of temple prostitution and sexual rites or mass orgies (planting the seed that brings new life) are more associated with the annual rising gods, rather than the human sacrifice rites.
- In addition, all of these “savior Gods” died in violent fashions and rose to overcome “death,” (as does Jesus) but none (other than Jesus) appear to have been “sacrificed” to meet the “needs” of a God. (They themselves were gods.)

Therefore, we need to make clear that there is a difference between, on one hand, the “dying and reborn gods” of many cultures, and on the “other,” the act of human sacrifice.” While many cultures practiced one or the other or both, they mainly were not directly associated with each other.

- Christianity is the closest of the major religions in merging these two different ancient religious concepts into one religious act, i.e. the sacrificing of God’s only begotten son, in time of earthly crisis.

We also see that sacrifice is different than prayer or devotion to a god;

- As distinct from prayer, sacrificial offerings include objects of value and symbolic significance that are given to the gods to earn their favor. The gifts can take many forms, becoming sacred themselves through ritual consecration. The gods might be offered the most desirable foods or provided with the finest vessels, carvings, tools, and weapons. Historians, however, have often regarded blood sacrifice as the most powerful way to appease the gods. It was not unusual for societies to engage in both animal and human sacrifice, although the historical trend has been toward a sharp reduction in the latter. <http://www.deathreference.com/Py-Se/Sacrifice.html>

And if we look at sacrifice of “goods” to gods, we can see that almost all cultures had a continuum of values placed on certain types of gifts, as well as restrictions and controls on how to sacrifice and when to sacrifice

- (See the Book of Leviticus for extensive rules on sacrifice of animals and the “share” entitled to God, the priests and the people)

And as noted, in many of the cultures, it appears that human sacrifice was considered the highest form of sacrifice, and one much needed (The Aztecs believed that without almost constant human sacrifice the sun could not move through the sky).

As we consider what little writings we have on human sacrifice from Ancients, we can see examples of these three types outlined above.

For example, in the Bible when talking about the Canaanites, it gives examples of the second type of sacrifice (in time of crisis, asking for God's help).

2 Kings 3:26

- “And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall.

The King of Moab (Mesha) sacrificed his son right in front of the Israeli armies, causing them to retreat in panic. (What is unclear in the passage is if the Israelis retreated based on horror of the act, or belief that since the sacrifice was made, God (or Gods) would then grant the Moab king victory.)

And the Bible gives an example of the third type (a new covenant); The king of Bethel sacrificed his child when building his city.

(1 Kings 16:34).

- Hiel of Bethel “built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub”

Here the king is making a contract for the long term good fortune of the city by sacrificing his son as part of the process of building the city.

- Also, as we will discuss later, the request of God to sacrifice Isaac clearly fits the paradigm of the time, and fits into this third type of sacrifice. (God and Abraham make a covenant ... Isaac will be sacrificed to “seal the deal.”

What we do know is that, in recorded times, human sacrifice to a deity was not limited to the Punic/Canaanite peoples alone (so highlighted in the Bible). Indeed, human sacrifice has been practiced by people around the world, in many cultures (until very recent times, or even currently).

- Some of the oldest remains we have of humans living in a “cultural setting” leaves open the possibility that such persons had been sacrificed. (see <http://gallery.sjsu.edu/sacrifice/home.html> Sacrifice in Ancient Cultures)
- We have evidences of the first type of sacrifice (to support the dying ruler) dating very far back into recorded history. Many ancient cultures, including the Sumerians, Egyptians and Chinese, buried many slaves and court officials of a dead king to “accompany the ruler to the next world.”
- We do know that the Ancients and Classicalists participated in this human sacrifice rite throughout the time until the advent of Christianity.
 - Rome sanctioned overt human sacrifice in response to the Punic victories in Italy during Hannibal's invasion.(around 215 BC)

- We also know that the practice continued in Europe, in the non-Christian lands until at least 1,000 AD, when we have recorded evidence of Scandinavian kings sacrificing their sons. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_sacrifice. They would also send off their kings with human sacrifices to accompany them to the next world.
 - (For a Muslim account of witnessing this rite see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_Fadlan) (The accounts of this Muslim ambassador was the basis for the recent movie “*The Thirteenth Warrior*”)

We also have evidence that the Minoan peoples of Crete, a contemporary culture with the historical setting covering the time from the stories of Abraham until around the time of the Exodus, also practice human sacrifice. Mainly, it appears the second type (boons for the gods);

- Evidence that suggest the Minoans may have performed human sacrifice has been found at three sites: (1) [Anemospilia](#), in a MMII building near Mt. Juktas, interpreted as a temple, (2) an EMII sanctuary complex at [Fournou Korifi](#) in south central Crete, and (3) [Knossos](#), in an LMIB building known as the “North House.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoans>

If valid, this shows that a “sister” culture during a relatively contemporary time frame as the early high water mark for the Phoenicians, also were practicing human sacrifice.

- In Greek myth, the purpose of Theseus’ voyage to Crete was to stop the annual tribute of sixteen Athenians young boys and girls destined to be eaten by the minotaur (or what appears to be a veiled cover story of Greek resistance to Cretans using subjected peoples for the sources of their human sacrifices).

We see this second type of sacrifice, the need to placate a god for one event, practiced in Ancient Greek stories as well; as seen in Homer, in the story of the Trojan War, where in order to get a favorable wind to sail to Troy, the Greeks needed to sacrifice a high born child

- A soothsayer named [Calchas](#) revealed an [oracle](#) that the only way to appease Artemis was to sacrifice Iphigeneia (daughter of Agamemnon) to Artemis. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iphigeneia> (which was done, and the winds did come.)

And, the key to understanding the use of high born children and adults as sacrifices to the gods is also key to understanding the value placed in the gods. These gods demanded and expected the best:

- Bulls were sacred to Egyptians more than 5,000 years ago, being associated with Taurus, a god with both animal and human features. For the Egyptians, then, the sacrifice of a bull was the gift of a demigod to the gods.
- In the years immediately preceding the emergence of Christianity some mystery cults switched from bulls to human sacrifices, using the same ceremonies in which the victim was first honored as a god, then put to bloody death.
- Osiris, the legendary Egyptian ruler who, murdered, became the god of fertility, casts a long shadow over these proceedings. Biblical scholars have often commented that the death of Jesus had been prefigured by other events in which a person was raised to

the status of a god and then sacrificed for the good of the people. .
<http://www.deathreference.com/Py-Se/Sacrifice.html>

As we evolved into modern states and peoples, some argue that the concept of human sacrifice has developed a new category, that of willingness to die, or just kill oneself, for the state. Therefore, some consider the mass suicides of both the Jews at Masada, and in modern times, certain groups of Japanese during WWII as a form of mass human sacrifice. Based on this addition, the following chart gives us some idea of the major concentration of human sacrifice in more modern history.

Human sacrifice and mass suicide

Low Estimate	Description	Group	Location	From	To	See also
2,000,000	Human sacrifice	Thuggee	India	1300's	1890	
2,000,000	Human sacrifice	Aztecs	Mexico	1400's	1600's	Human sacrifice in Aztec culture
80,000	Mass suicide	Japanese civilians	Japan	1945	1945	Battle of Okinawa
62,400	Individual suicides	Sati (practice)	India	1900's	1988?	
13,000[35]	Human sacrifice	Shang dynasty	China	BC1300	BC1050	Last 250 years of rule
8,000	Mass suicide	Japanese civilians	Mariana Islands	1944	1944	Battle of Saipan
3,000	Mass human sacrifice	Aztecs	Huitzilopochtli, Tenochtitlan	1487	1487	

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_disasters_by_death_toll

And as we can see, the concept was not limited to the West, and occurred in all areas of the civil world. In addition, it did not “die” out in many areas until most recent times:

- In 1565 Rajah Narayana of Assam, India, celebrated a new temple by sacrificing 140 men, whose heads he offered on copper plates to Kali. Hindu rites often involved sacrifice. For instance, a male child would be killed every Friday evening in the temple

of Shiva at Tanjor.

- In 1727 in ceremonies (for a dead king in Dahomey), as many as 4,000 were reported killed. In addition Dahomey had an Annual Custom during which 500 prisoners were sacrificed. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

Not included in this chart is the Phoenician/Hebrew/Israelite/Jewish, and Carthaginian numbers, simply because we do not actually know how many were killed and for how long the killings were practiced. In part, perhaps, we don't know the numbers because we don't want to know; but more likely because we simply do not have the records to prove the numbers.

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Subsection B A New Age Of Thought

In general, when it comes to human sacrifice, we tend to trust some evidence from very ancient cultures and times long ago on the beliefs and rites of these cultures and this act; and we also have cultural anthropological access to “primitive cultures” from which we can project (not always well) what and how these ancient cultures thought about human sacrifice and its value and importance.

- However, there has been a great deal of “suppression of the “data” by our “more civilized” societies and the founders of our current religious concepts, denying or doubting that our peoples of the past, our fore-parents, could have possibly participated in what is now considered such a terrible act.

While our modern people are clearly involved in this avoidance, this repression of history really began during a time when the practice of the human sacrifice was still widely practiced, but philosophy and religion was moving away from the practice of human offerings. Why and how this decreasing use of human sacrifice came about in some of the dominant cultures of the Near East and Europe is not completely clear. However, there appears to be a connection between the eventual rejection of the concepts of human sacrifice, and the period of time known as the Axial Age.

- This “Axial” period of time is dated by modern historians from about 800 BC to 200 BC, and it is a time when we start to see the critical changes in thought and religion that bring about the world wide revolution in “thought” and “spiritualism” that laid the foundation for not only the religions of the modern world, but the political and social constructs of the modern age as well. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axial_Age

The concepts of individual liberty, as well as a beneficial role for the “state” (both with the development of “democracy” in Greece, and of Confucius in Asia), were developed in this time period as well. The religious concepts of monotheism really began to develop and spread among peoples in these centuries, as well as the great influence of the dualism of Persia and its view of the struggle between good and evil. It is in this time period and under these new influences that these new religions, and social structures of the Mediterranean basin change dramatically, challenging the 4,000 years or so of accepted world views on religion, and also the accepted view of the “state.” These new concepts of the Axial Age process eventually offered a new direction to people in the understanding of the functioning of the mundane, as well as the divine.

The struggles between the ideas of the Axial Age and the “old order of things” creates a major philosophical and political struggle that is still being played out today, but is mostly beyond the scope of this book (for a partial history of this struggle please see the *Closing of the Western Mind*). However, we need to investigate some of these events and ideas involved in order to follow the story line concerning human sacrifice and its evolution into modern times.

First of all, there were a few elements that made the Axial age possible, these include; but are in no way limited to: the ability to better travel in the world, mainly because of the

development of major empires that ensured safety for its citizens; the development of better roads (initially for communication for the emperors, but used by a wide range of peoples) And of course, the development of writing, that enabled the concepts to be transmitted with consistency to a wide ranges of places, and was not dependent upon the travel of the one person who developed the idea.

There was also the great impact of major multinational wars (which brought various peoples together in the multinational armies for long periods of time), and politics, as well that allowed for cross cultural contacts and the exchange of ideas (through exchanging of ambassadors and exiled philosophers, etc). In addition to writing, there was also the development of more “common languages” or better said, commonly used languages, at first Persian, and then later Greek and Latin, so more people were able to read and discuss ideas using a common language.

However, with the rise of these new Axial Age ideas, the reaction to them among the people of the world fell into roughly four major absolutist categories:

- 1) Full acceptance and embracing of the new ideas (while the ideas varied from place to place and time to time, some people were willing to wholeheartedly abandon their cultural beliefs for new concepts flooding the “market place of ideas.” So, for example, people who willingly became radical atheist, and people who became radical monotheist could both fit in this category, since they abandoned their old “sky gods” religious concepts so long held by “their people”)
- 2) Full rejection and denial of the new ideas (holding deeply to the ways of the past and attempting to resist the new approaches through active and passive means.)
- 3) Merging the new ideas with the old to create compromised “concepts” that allowed people to keep some of the old ways, while accepting some of the new ones. (One of the most noted of these ‘compromisers” is Philo of Alexandria who, in the early first century AD, attempted to merge the philosophy and other concepts of the Greeks and Jewish monotheism, and is often credited, by doing so, in creating the foundations of what evolved into Orthodox (Nicene Creed) Christianity.
- 4) Morphing of the two worlds, in which the façade of the new and the terms of the new set of ideas, were used to mask the continuation of the old. This approach is clearly different from those who added some new ideas, while maintaining many of the old (the third response), or the “honest” intellectual approach of the third option to merge ideas. This forth response was one that clearly and deliberately changed the meanings and intentions of the new concepts, to allow for the continuation of the old concepts “by other means”, and under different names and terms.

And of course there are exceptions and variations from these four groupings. One clear exception it that of the Epicureans, who while mainly fit into the first category, could under their philosophy allow for elements of the third and fourth groupings. Please see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicureanism>

- Epicurus believed that the greatest good was to seek modest pleasures in order to attain a state of tranquility and freedom from fear ([ataraxia](#)) as well as absence of bodily pain ([aponia](#)) through knowledge of the workings of the world and the limits of

our desires.

The Axial Age is really a time of extremes in thinking, maybe the “original birth of freedom” (as opposed to Lincoln’s concept of “a new birth of freedom”); in this time frame, of the Axial Age, we not only see the rise of Greek rationalism;

- The first real books of history (that we really know about), and the first efforts to look at the universe as a process of natural order based on “laws,” mainly independent of the actions of a “god” or gods, and with this freedom came vast advances in science and technology,

But we also see an oppositional Jewish contribution to the thinking of the times.

- With a rewriting of the Hebrew Bible during this Axial age, to change the stories to fit their new Jewish concept; that all events and functioning of the universe are based on the will of one god, and they are in fact the chosen people of this one God.

The Greek views developed during this Age included the first ideas concerning individualism and the rights of persons within cultures to achieve and to be free to explore and reach their own conclusions concerning the nature of the world and of God. While again, during this time the Jews became more and more absolutist in their concepts and willing to punish people for both transgressions of the laws of God and apostate acts.

- There were of course contradictions within the Greeks, as most Greek cities maintained some loyalty to the “gods” and as the Greeks grew in intellectual diversity and power. In addition, the Greek leaders over time tended to adopt the ancient power of “god kings” and to chose some absolutism in rule and reject their own belief in human liberty.
- There were also contradictions within the Jews, as most of the “mass of the people” maintain their beliefs in many gods, and the old ways of sacrifice, including human sacrifice, right up to the fall of the Jewish kingdom, and for those who did not participate in the Exile, possibly well beyond the fall of Judea.

While these two opposing views of Greeks and Jews, concerning the nature of the universe and God, developed during the Axial age, were deeply influenced by the contributions of Persia and other contemporary cultures, how the conflict played out greatly influenced the story of the evolution of human sacrifice. The story of this evolution also involves how each of the four groups listed above (accepters, rejecters, mergers, and morphers) interpreted how the Greeks, Jews, Persians and others, saw God and the “state.” It was these interpretations that also helped to shape how human sacrifice evolved and presented itself differently throughout this Axial Age and into the modern world.

In addition, in many cultures, during the Axial Age, there was a reshaping of peoples’ history and their stories of the past to disguise past practices that had become “out of date” in the new age. (Stalin’s concept of re-writing history to suit his needs is nothing new). Therefore, the extent to which there was human sacrifice in many cultures has become clouded in (dare I say it) myth.

We in America now, as a people, simply do not seem to want to accept that our past “civilized” ancestors actually did horrible things that we consider “uncivilized”. So we as a

people tend not to want to know much about the forced expulsion of Native Americans for the Eastern lands of the US, or about slavery, or the horrid working conditions of the working class in the 19th century, or the “detention” of all persons of Japanese descent during WWII (except for the young men who would fight in the US Army) We tend to gloss over it, or say to those oppressed by the events “get over it, more on that was so ... last century”

In many ways, that effort to “forget about it” is how the persons in the Axial Age started to view the practice of human sacrifice. There were major cultural efforts to repress and hide the fact that this type of event occurred in these peoples’ past. In the *Sacred Executioner*, Dr. Hiram Maccoby argues that we, as a species, suffer from a form of collective guilt concerning human sacrifice.

- The historical reality that lies behind all these stories (myths), I shall argue, is the institution of human sacrifice, which was practiced throughout the ancient world.
- Very few of the myths we shall be considering actually portray human sacrifice openly; instead, we find stories about accidental deaths on the one hand, or about murders (carried out for merely personal reasons) on the other.
- Both modulations are intended to absolve society of responsibility for the violent deaths that occur in the stories. For human sacrifice seems almost never to have been unaccompanied by guilt on the part of the society in which it occurred and by a consequent desire to shift the blame, despite the desperate need that was felt to accomplish the deed. (An exception is the society of the Aztecs, which seems to have been almost entirely free of guilt for the institution of human sacrifice, though even here, some details are relevant to our purpose.)
- Thus, the myth will rarely admit openly that the slaying in the story was performed as a ritual sacrifice. Instead, it will say that an accident occurred, or alternatively that the slaying was a wicked deed performed by a murderer who was subsequently punished.
- How do we know then, that ritual sacrifice is the real subject of the myth? This is betrayed by the equivocal character of the story. Some good consequence will be seen to flow from the slaying: a city will be founded, or a nation will be inaugurated, or a famine will be stayed, or a people will be saved from the wrath of the gods, or a threatening enemy will be defeated. Such good consequences are exactly the results that were hoped for by the performance of human sacrifice. (pages 7-8)
<http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

(Or the consequence fits into the three categories of sacrifice present above.)

Maccoby points out some obvious potential examples of human sacrifice that appear in myths as murders or other type of events, but are masking the cultural past. The four most famous are::

- Cain and Able
- Isaac
- Romulus and Reamus
- Thuseaus and the Minotaur

And for the purpose of our book, we need to add to this the self-immolation of Dido, (who we also know as Elissa), at the time of the founding of Carthage. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dido>

But Elissa preferred to stay faithful to her first husband and after creating a ceremonial [funeral pyre](#) and sacrificing many victims to his spirit in pretense that this was a final honoring of her first husband in preparation for marriage to Iarbas, Elissa ascended the pyre, announced that she would go to her husband as they desired, and then slew herself with her sword. After this self-sacrifice Elissa was deified and was worshipped as long as Carthage endured. In this account, the foundation of Carthage occurred 72 years before the foundation of Rome.

8th Century Etruscan art showing human sacrifice – not the angel like character



Here we see the story where sacrifice is used in two of the three areas outlined – to honor a dead king, and in the founding of a new city.

However, using this format or approach, we can see some other familiar stories from the Bible as perhaps masking issues of human sacrifice. As Maccoby points out, the story of story of Abraham and Isaac is an obvious candidate for the retelling of a human sacrifice (and one that fits well into the third groupings (solidifying the covenant). Many other Bible stories should also be reconsidered in light of Maccoby’s concepts of hiding the facts with a “cover story” or myth. Two examples of candidates for reconsideration I would include are the stories of “the slaying of the first born” during the Exodus, and the death of David’s first son with Bathsheba.

- Using Maccoby’s point of view, the tenth plague was possibly self-inflicted by the Egyptians as a means of addressing the terrors inflicted by the other plagues on the land. If this event happened at all and was actually a “sacrifice” rather than God’s action, it would fit neatly into the second type outlined above.
- The death of David’s first son, as the penalty for David’s sins concerning Bathsheba, can also be seen, using Maccoby’s approach, as simply the sacrifice of the first born son, as a means for the establishment of the line of David (or the third type of sacrifice.)

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Part C Slayings of the First Born Reconsidered

Among the most remembered and dramatic stories of the Old Testament is the critical events leading up to the coming of freedom for the Hebrew slaves as retold every year in every practicing Jewish home, as the story of Passover. The key to the story is the refusal of Pharaoh to “let my people go” until the last and most dreadful of all the plagues, in one night the slaying of the first born sons of all the Egyptians. As the story or myth is told, God sends an angel to kill all the first born children (sons) in the houses not marked by the “blood of the lamb.” The angel “passed over” these marked houses and the Hebrew families are spared, while all Egyptian families, including the Pharaoh’s suffer the loss of the “beloved son.”

Many biblical and social scholars have offered a wide range of explanations for the possible occurrence of events as outlined in the Bible (including that the Egyptians lived in stone houses and were therefore subjected to the effect of an earthquake (killing family members, where the Hebrews living in reed huts would not be impacted.) More recently a great deal of scholarship and investigation has gone into investigating the possibility that the volcanic eruption that helped destroy the Cretan civilization could also have caused the ten plagues in Egypt.

- However, if we look at the story of the plagues using Maccoby’s concepts, we can get a different insight, that being a “collective effort” to forget a dramatic incident of human sacrifice.

The history of the Exodus, if in fact it was a historical event, is so clouded and unsupported by any historical findings, that making judgments on the timeframe of the event is very difficult. Most “maximalist” historians (seeing the Bible as a major and correct source of history) tend to date the event around a two hundred year period of 1400 to 1200 BC. However, there is no Egyptian documentation to support the Bible story, and the time frame chosen for the story does not fit well in Egyptian history per say, either.

Despite no direct mention in the Bible, it is a historic fact that the areas of the Nile Delta where the Jews were “slaves unto Pharaoh” were, for 400 years ruled by the Hyksos, and that the Hyksos were in fact Semites (as were the Canaanites). So there is some foundation for the Abrahamic tribes to come into the Egyptian Delta during that time, like so many other Canaanite and Semitic tribes did looking for relief from drought and other issues. We also know that the Hyksos did rule a great deal of Northern Egypt for nearly 400 years (roughly 1700 -1300 BC), and after that time, the Delta was re-conquered by “nationalist” Egyptians (a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph?), and could have subjugated the remaining Hyksos peoples (and Hebrews) to servitude.

However, the story does break down when comparing the Bible story timeframe to the historically known time frame, since the known historical time line does not allow for the Hebrews to be slaves to the new Pharaoh for 400 years (so there are issues of interpretation here --- were the Hebrews in Egypt a total of 400 years, with a small part of the time being slaves, or were the Hebrews slaves for 400 years?)

In addition, the Egyptian dynasty that breaks the Hyksos power appears to be strong and vigorous, and eventually able to be among the few major powers in the Ancient world (along with the Phoenicians) to withstand the invasions of the Sea People.

While the extensive and ancient writings of Egypt are filled with descriptions of major disasters and great troubles (which could be seen as manifestations of the plagues listed in the Bible), these writings are not dated to the post-Hyksos dynasties. In fact, this post Hyksos time period is one in which we find Egypt to be strong and expanding. The Egyptians, in fact, took revenge on the Semite peoples, and established control over Canaan during this time. Rather than losing control of Semite slaves, they were able to enslave Semite peoples throughout Asia.

- So, while some of the Bible story can fit into known history, the overall story fails to be supported by what we know from solid evidence based on the Egyptian chronicles and other historic sources. (Nor does the story of Hebrew conquest of the “holy land” fit well into the known historic time line).

However, let’s consider one option for how the story could have been played out (and eventually rewritten into another version) that fits the historical data a bit more. Under this scenario it really does not matter if the actual “exodus” took place or if it was a story developed centuries later to give a people a “history.” The critical factor in this approach is that the story was developed as part of the “history” of the people to help it address the masking of a story of major human sacrifice (right along the lines of Maccoby’s concepts).

In this interpretation, more based in historical factors, the slaying of the first born was a common and accepted reaction of the ruling class of the Hyksos, to the defeat by the Egyptian nationalists, (and the resulting loss of the Delta to the Southern (Egyptian) invaders. Clearly, we know that the Hyksos were Semitic, and the Semites of the time practiced the rituals of child sacrifice, and that it is therefore likely that the Hyksos practiced human sacrifice.

- “The Hyksos had [Canaanite](#) names, as seen in those which contain the names of Semitic deities such as [Anath](#) or [Ba’al](#).” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyksos>

Therefore, it is not impossible to think that in reply to the other plagues (or the impact of the defeat in war (river being turn into blood, by the blood the slain soldiers is not an unusual term used in ancient and modern writings, famine as a result of war, hail in the use of sieges of cities using catapults to attack cities with flaming objects, etc) to the new nationalist Pharaoh, the Hyksos rulers could have followed the religious norms of the time, and killed their own children, as a sacrifice to the gods in an effort to stop the series of devastating events (as noted – an example of the second type of sacrifice).

The cultural requirement of this type of sacrifice was usually only made only upon the ruling elements of the society, and since the Hebrew tribes were not among that group, then they were “passed over” from the responsibility of the killings. The remainder of the story (the flight) could be a retelling of one of many Hyksos groups who chose to flee Egypt (which had been their home for 400 years) to seek a new “promised land” and avoid the retribution of the new Egyptian Empire.

In this sequence, the naturally occurring conflict within the Hyksos community is played out by

two opposing forces and ideas; the Pharaoh as the doomed leader determined to fight to the end to hold on to the Delta and other Hyksos lands, and Moses as the leader who sees the “writing on the wall” (OK wrong place and time – this being from the Book of Daniel, but it works here). The Moses group wants to flee and get away from the rape and ruin that will face the Hyksos when the land falls to the new rulers. The element of “God” is added to justify the “defeatist” attitudes of Moses, and to justify the fact that the Hyksos do lose in Northern Egypt, despite the efforts, and literal sacrifice, of the ruling class.

Following the “collective guilt” idea of Maccoby, later, the story is reshaped and retold as God taking steps to “free” the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews, from both the wrong-headedness of the Hyksos rulers and the certain consequence of the new rulers on the Hyksos people. But more importantly for this work, the story is retold that the sacrifice of the first born in reaction to the defeats were God’s action, and God’s action alone – shifting the responsibility away from fellow Semites, and even just fellow humans, to an all knowing, and also guiltless God.

- So, while the folk history of the great sacrifice of the Hyksos rulers was too great to completely eliminate, the “masked” story of the killings remained; but the responsibility shifted to the one true and great god, and the people were blameless.

Despite the rewrites and the effort to mask the human sacrifice elements, there is possibly an interesting peak behind the myth to the real meaning of the event (the slaying of the first born) that somehow did not get as censored in the rewriting of the story of the Exodus.

- In giving the new laws to Moses, the issue of child sacrifice seems to be a critical matter and is discussed several times between God and Moses, sometimes saying God gets the first born, and some times saying the Hebrews/Jews can and should “redeem” the first born child by the sacrificing of other things of value (“but none should appear before me empty handed”).

However, we see in one of the discussions, in Numbers 8:17 that God seems to be saying that the Hebrews “owe” God their first born sons as a kind of payment for sparing the children of the Hebrews during the Passover night Egypt.

This passage seems to say that they (the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews) were required to provide the sacrifice on an ongoing basis for being rescued from slavery, and being given the laws and the “promised land.” (or type three of the sacrifice ... payment for a covenant.)

Numbers 8:17

- “For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself.”

So this passage seems to be saying that since God only took the lives of the Egyptians’ first born on that one night, the Hebrews were not exempted from the obligation of giving them to God; these sacrifices were not required due to the need to end a crisis (the second kind of human sacrifice), but in fact were due as the long-term payment for saving the Hebrews from the tyranny of the Egyptian slavery and the promised bright future (or the third type of sacrifice).

Therefore, this statement could be saying that since the Hebrews were not of the upper class and were therefore not required to sacrifice at the time of the crisis, they were now becoming

the new ruling class, and as such were now required to continue the tradition of sacrifice of the first born to God, not as a “bribe” to end a bad event, but as the on-going normal requirement of the ruling class to make such a sacrifice, or tribute to God.

And we see this on-going obligation of the ruling class to sacrifice the first born son in a story that is placed some 200-300 years after the Exodus story (depending on which sequence is followed) This involves another of the most popular stories in the Old Testament, the (unclear) events concerning David and his first child by Bathsheba.

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Subsection D- David's Story Reconsidered

Again, in the West at least, the story is well known of how David spotted Bathsheba in her bath. He then starts an affair with her and gets her pregnant. After failing to get her husband to sleep with her, so the pregnancy can be passed off to a normal husband and wife event, David has the husband killed (by sending him on what amounts to a suicide mission). Once the husband is dead, David is now free to marry Bathsheba and have the baby be "legal," and Bathsheba is free of a capital crime (of adultery). (What has often been left out of the telling of the story is that adultery was a capital offense at the time for the woman, so the effort to resolve the matter was of great urgency.)

However, the story of David's actions could not be hidden from the court and David is attacked by a prophet for his overt deeds. The attacks by the prophet go so far as to threaten his right to rule, and even his right to live, (guess they could "impeach" him for messing around back then too). Although David repents and is spared, his actions are not without consequence.

Samuel II Chapter 12

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

So, according to the Bible, to pay for the sin of arranging the death of Bathsheba's husband in combat, God (through Nathan) condemned David to die, but relents after David admitted guilt. However, God (Nathan) still stated that the child conceived out of wedlock, in the adulterous relationship, would die.

The child was born, and died despite seven days of fasting on the part of David. After the death of the child, according to the Bible, there was, in fact, a feast. This was much to the amazement of the "Hebrew/Jewish" leadership, but David passed it off as saying that he had prayed and failed, so now he was feasting.

Samuel II Chapter 12

22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

While this is a far lesser event in the Bible than the story of the ten plagues, it is an event that is also problematic for us to historically verify. In an introductory essay I show that there is little fact that David existed - other than in myth. In addition there is no really good support from known evidence of the existence of a Davidic great kingdom.

But let's look at this story as if David is real, or at least in part true. How does this story fit into Maccoby's conceptions? First, David in the Bible story was a ruler of a polyglot culture, (the people of the city itself were called Jesubites; Bathsheba's husband was a Hittite). This realm is one that appeared to be still mainly populated by Canaanites. In fact, according to the Bible, Jerusalem was a Canaanite city, somewhat newly won, by David. Clearly, David as a "wise ruler" had to follow a policy that allowed for support from the Hebrews/Israelites and from the Canaanites.

To maintain this support, he would need to follow the religious rituals of both major groups. Therefore, in following standard practice of the Canaanites (Phoenicians) of the time, David was expected to sacrifice the first born of his primary wife, and the second born (Solomon) would become the next king. This appears to have been the exact series of events. In this interpretation, David fulfilled his obligations to the non-Yahwehist population of the city through the death of his first born son, clearing the way for the second to become the new king.

However, David also had to be "politic" with the Yahwehists. To do so, David (or the writers of the story) appears to have created a "cover story" for the death of the first child (God condemned the child) and, the supposed unusual (for the Yahwehist, but not the Ba'alist (or Canaanites) sequence he took (fasting, then feasting) at the birth and death could be explained to the followers of Yahweh. Although considered odd by Nathan and the other Yahwehists, the cover story was accepted, and David, through the death of the "adulterous child" was able to please everyone.

So, while this David story is placed in a time in history when the king, whether Yahwehist or not, is apparently expected to sacrifice his first born (maintaining an ongoing covenant), in later times, when the ban on human sacrifice became codified in the Jewish traditions, the story of the greatest of all Jewish kings sacrificing a child was simply unacceptable and had to be changed. The later writers of the Bible could not allow the mighty King David to be among those who conducted what had evolved from standard practice to become the most vile of all acts. However, as with so many of these "histories", the folk stories were just too well known to be eliminated completely. Therefore, the cover story may have been developed at the time of the death of the infant, or much later in history to cover the guilt as projected by Maccoby..

So the re-writers of the Bible, mainly based on this concept of collective guilt, could not eliminate the story completely, but edited it so that the death was required by God, to pay for the sin of David. The guilt of sacrificing his son was removed from David or from any human, and passed on to God alone, and all men were guiltless in this event. As Maccoby points out, great things came about through this action; so after the death of the first child, the Bible says David lived, built an empire, and Solomon (the second son) succeeded him, and built the first temple. David and Solomon were the greatest of all kings. All this came about as a result of the death of the first born son of David; the contract between king and God was fulfilled.

Part III – Human Sacrifice

Section I - A Step Further Back ...

Subsection E - Morphing Of Human Sacrifice During The Axial Age

Using the four concepts presented of how persons responded to the Axial Age, (rush to join it, resistance, merging, and morphing), we can reconsider how we look at human sacrifice, and when it stopped or did not stop being part of the cultures of people by looking at the rite based on each of the four types of reaction. However, for the key premise of this work, we need to look at the process of how the concept was “morphed.”.

- It appears that human sacrifice was one of the key concepts of the old religions that were greatly “morphed” to “allow” for its continuations, only under other names and processes.

A more traditional historical view is that the “high water” mark, in the Ancient world, for the use of human sacrifice appears to be some 4-5,000 years ago with large scale use in Sumer and Egypt. From this vantage point human sacrifice only continued into modern times with the practices of isolated and “savage” peoples such as in remote areas (New Guinea, Solomon Islands, etc), with the one key exception being the “high civilizations” of the Americas.”

This world view on human sacrifice is open to interpretation and argument and, of course, is based on “definition of terms” since most historians do not look at the concept of the role of human sacrifice morphing into other rituals. For example, was Roman Gladiator combat a form of human sacrifice? The gladiator contests initially were linked to funeral rites and could be seen as a form of human sacrifice to the departed (or the first type of sacrificed listed.)

- Tertullian, a Christian writer ... of the second century, claimed that gladiatorial combat was a human sacrifice to the manes or spirits of the dead.
<http://www.unrv.com/culture/gladiator.php>

If we do see this practice of mass ritual killings in public as a form of continuation of the practice of human sacrifice, then it's hard to say when the “high water mark” for the practice occurred. We can say with confidence that this practice lasted some 600 years after the supposed ending of the Axial age (the last Gladiator combats took place around 400 AD.)

Furthermore, if we start to look at witch burnings and the Auto de Fe as possible descendants of the overt practices of human sacrifice, (with at least tens of thousands killed through these practices) the “high water mark” gets even murkier. The question of when “civilized” peoples stopped the rite is also far less clear.

Its important to remember that, human sacrifice was practiced across the world. The high water mark for sacrifice clearly differs in different parts of the world. For example, China seems to be using extensive sacrificing till about 500 BC, only to be stopped on the grand scale by the “first Emperor” in 200 BC. (As shown by the grave site of the first Emperor in Xian where there was the substitution of the newly discovered and now internationally famous 10,000 or so terra cotta warriors for the real people.) His substitution of clay representations of people appears to be a unique and creative form of “morphing” of the rite of mass sacrifice.

In addition, one universally recognized group of people who practiced ritual human sacrifice on a “grand scale” are the Mesoamericans of the Mexico and Central America. While there is some controversy on the amount committed, there is clearly no doubt that the Aztec and Mayan cultures of the new world practiced this ritual for many hundreds if not thousands of years. (And, according to some Pre-Columbian contact theories, this practice could have been Phoenician-influenced.) The reports by the early Spanish historians (again, could be very biased) included one that the Aztecs sacrificed 80,000 people in just a one week period. (Again, however, the Mesoamericans were not influenced by the Axial Age, so this fact is less relevant to this section of the book, but is important in understanding the use of the rite throughout history and world cultures.)

Despite the efforts of historians and the Church of the time of the conquest and mostly until present day, these Mesoamericans were not “savage and isolated” peoples, but highly cultured and sophisticated peoples. Over centuries of study they developed the most complex and accurate calendar the world will know until the advent of space exploration. The Spanish were in awe of their wealth, populations and extensive markets, which compared to almost nothing in Europe at the time; but these peoples practiced extensive human sacrifice.

- The Mayan high water mark for sacrifice seems to have ended about 800 AD, with the smaller Mayan groups continuing to use it to some degree till the coming of the Spanish. The Aztecs practiced human sacrifice on a large scale until the coming of the Spanish, perhaps as high as 100,000 persons a year (more likely far less, or around 10,000 a year; however, still a huge number.)

The Aztecs saw these sacrifices, as the source of energy for the gods to maintain the movement of the sun (fitting into the third type of sacrifice listed). They conducted wars on their neighbors to get a source for these sacrifices from the conquered peoples. One of main reasons Cortez was able to find willing allies among non-Aztec peoples when he landed was that the other tribes wanted to put an end to being the source of this human tribute.

- (One interesting theory as to why the Aztecs practice human sacrifice on such a large scale is presented on a “cultural materialism basis in Marvin Harris’ *Cannibals and Kings*. He claims that the human victims were also the main source of protein for the Aztec diet)

While the Mesoamerican were most likely not influenced by the ideas of the Axial Age, other peoples in Europe and Asia who were continued almost overt forms of human sacrifice. Up until modern times in India, it was somewhat customary for wives to “accompany” their husbands into death by throwing themselves on to the funeral fire (sati)

- Widow burning, the practice as understood today, started to become more extensive after about 500 AD, and the end of the Gupta Empire. .. There are also suggestions that the practice was introduced into India by the [Huna](#) Buddhist invaders who contributed to the fall of the Gupta empire By about the 10th century (AD) *sati*, as understood today, was known across much of the subcontinent. It continued to occur, usually at a low frequency and with regional variations, until the early 19th century. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sati_%28practice%29

Whether this act of Sati as developed fits into the first definition of sacrifice presented (providing company for the noted dead) or if it was a way of avoiding state compensation to

widows (a potential Marvin Harris analysis), is unclear. However, the structure fits into the format of human sacrifice and should, at a minimum, be considered as a continuation of the practice into a modern form of ritual. We should pay less attention to the modern stated intentions, and perhaps consider this continuation as an example of cultural “resistance” to outside ideas.

Europe does not seem to be exempt from large scale use of human sacrifice in its history, as well. There is some evidence that the Celtic peoples of Europe had human sacrifice as a central part of their religious practices (We know of the practice though the concepts called the “Wicker Man”- featured in at least two movies). There is some evidence that the source of the Celtic practices is the long time connection between the Celts and the Phoenicians (through trade and direct Punic rule, or even the possibility that the Celts are descendants of the Phoenicians themselves).

- The Celts were allied with Carthage throughout the multi-century long wars with the Greeks and Rome for control of the Western Mediterranean Sea, and often made up the bulk of the Carthaginian armies.

However, there is actually limited documented evidence to support the assertion of Celtic use of human sacrifice. One of the key pieces of written evidence came from Julius Caesar, as he recorded in the event in his wars of conquest in his Gallic War commentaries. (Was this description of real events or propaganda?) In addition, far after Caesar’s wars with Gaul, Roman sources also talk of the Germans making human sacrifice (and as noted we see this practice among the Vikings around the first millennia.)

In Rome there is some evidence that the practice of human sacrifice was not limited to the Gladiator Games. Some writings say Romans allowed for official human sacrifice on several occasions in their history (over the course of at least 450 years). As we will see later, the Romans of the early third century AD included the sacrifice of young children in a first attempt to develop a unified state religion.

- For a far greater overview of some other cultures’ practices concerning human sacrifices see the chapter on its use in the James Frazer’s *Golden Bough*, Chapter 47, available on-line at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/frazer/gb04703.htm>

Therefore, the Phoenician practice of human sacrifice was neither unique to the Ancient or Classical world, nor was it “abhorrent” to most of the peoples of the world at the time. If we say that the height of Phoenician/Carthage greatness was roughly 2000 BC to 200 BC, then we have solid evidence to say that the practice of human sacrifice on a scale far larger than what the Phoenicians practiced would had been in place for at least 5-6000 years previous and, at least in the West and among the Classical cultures for another some 700 years after the decline of the Punic people. In addition, we can see the continued overt used in Nordic and Mesoamerican cultures for at least another 1200 years.

By this quick review, we can therefore conclude two things:

- 1) The Phoenicians, in their practice of human sacrifice, were not out of the mainstream of the practices of the time, and
- 2) Perhaps the Phoenicians were part of the cultures that were decreasing the use of human sacrifice, but still actively engaged in the rite, and saw positive value in its use.

In addition, we can say that the Phoenicians, at least in the early stages of the Axial Age, did not morph their practice of human sacrifice, but fell into that second group, the resisters. They apparently maintained their practices. Only later, after major defeats can we see that the Phoenicians concepts were “morphed” into other religions, with more cultures following the fourth response to the Axial Age, that of trying to maintain the practice, but by using different terminology, and taking new concepts and making them fit into the old ideals.

Before proceeding into more details regarding the morphing concepts, we need to go into more detail about five key points raised earlier:

1. Was human sacrifice a key element of Phoenician religion?
2. Was the Phoenician influence on this rite present within the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean community?
3. Did the Phoenicians, over at least a 1,000 year period, if not longer, introduce and spread the practice into large areas of the Mediterranean basin?
4. Did the Phoenicians maintain and support this cultural belief, along with the rest of their religion throughout a millennium of foreign domination?
5. Despite long term military and cultural defeats, did the religion of Phoenicia become one of the first great rivals of Christianity?

There are other key questions that will be raised and answered later, concerning the influence that the religion of the Phoenicians may have had on the development of the Jewish religion and the Christian religion, including

- Was the core element of Christianity a “morphing” of Phoenician religious rites?

However, prior to discussing these other questions, we need to make sure the foundation is solid regarding these first five points.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection A – Preliminary information about the use of the term Ba'al

Before answering the five questions concerning this section, we need give a little more background on the religion itself, primarily, about the title or term “Ba'al. There are several ways the term can be used.

The term Ba'al can refer to a particular god, a storm cloud god, or sun god, but, it also can be used interchangeably with the word “God” or Lord”. So

- There is a at least one particular “Ba'al” and
- There are also many “Ba'als”,

The “particular” Ba'al is, according to the Phoenician religion, the son of Dagon, and the chief rival of Yam, the son of El, the chief God of the Pantheon. Ba'al was the key god around which the Phoenician “dying and rising” stories revolves. He is clearly the precursor, by some 1000 years at least (perhaps 4000 years or more) of the Greek “Zeus” and the Roman “Jupiter”,

- **Baal (Hadad)** is regularly denominated “the son of **Dagan**,” Baal also bears the titles “**Rider of the Clouds**,” “**Almighty**,” and “**Lord of the Earth**.” He is the god of the thunderstorm, the most vigorous and aggressive of the gods, the one on whom mortals most immediately depend. Baal resides on Mount Zaphon, north of Ugarit, and is usually depicted holding a thunderbolt. (As opposed to Zeus, who resided on Mount Olympus and used a thunderbolt.) For the full Ba'al Cycle see <http://www.piney.com/BaalEpic.html>

(By the way, this description of Baal was Jim Morrison's inspiration for the song Riders on The Storm)

It is important to note that the god Ba'al and his father had several roles in the religion of the area and period, some of these concepts on the role of Dagan will become critical in understand in the relationship of Ba'al and Christianity, as well as just the general morphing of religion in the area.

- **Dagan** was a deity of grain, the meaning of his name in North West Semitic languages (Hebrew, Ugaritic), this latter language is a fact that betrays Dagan's origins in Syria and Canaan before the spread of his cult throughout the ancient Near East in the late third millennium BCE.
- As the “corn god”, Dagan was popularly associated with fertility and prosperity, ... The Ugaritic texts reveal that Dagan was looked upon as the father of Baal/ Hadad, and second in rank only to the supreme god El. ...
- This apparent connection with the underworld (perhaps reflecting the cyclic growth and decay of the crops) is borne out in an Assyrian poem in which Dagan is depicted

seated alongside Nergal and Mišaru as divine judge of the dead.

- In later Babylonian belief Dagan acted as the prisoner in the underworld of the seven children of the god Emmešarra (the Seven Gods).
http://www.ancientneareast.net/religion_mesopotamian/gods/dagan.html

Therefore, we see that Ba'al is the son of the bringer of good things (grain) but also the son of the one who both judges the dead and the jailer of the underworld (key parts of the role of the future "devil".)

It also appears that the Ba'al of the Phoenicians was modeled after one of the key gods of the very early Sumerian/Babylonians.

- Here the name (Bel) is that of one of the earliest and most honored of national deities. Bel was the special god of Nippur, perhaps the oldest of Babylonian cities. Nippur was, in the earliest known times, a religious center, and the prestige of Bel was so great that when the city of Babylon became supreme, his name was imposed upon that of Merodach, the patron deity of the capital who was thenceforth known as Bel-Merodach or simply Bel (compare Isa. xlv. 1). Bel in the Babylonian pantheon, ... appears as the god of the earth, distinguished from Anu, the god of the heavens, and Ea, the god of the lower world. ... Bel, accordingly, became a distinct national god, with a proper name, at an early date, though at a comparatively late stage of religious development.
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=2&letter=B>

The texts that have been found in the ancient Phoenician sites, retelling the Ba'al cycle and the story of the internal battle with the gods, include no mention of human sacrifice. While this is true, this does not really answer the question of whether or not Phoenicians offered human sacrifices to "Ba'al".

However, the language and terminology of the time had multiple uses of the term "Ba'al." In addition to the particular god, and to that one particular myth cycle and all the other stories associated with "Ba'al"; we also find that in the early writings;

- "Ba'al" can refer to any god and even to human officials; ... Therefore, in any text using the word *ba'al* it is important first to determine precisely which god, spirit or demon (or human) is meant. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal>

In many ways, the simplest way of translating the term "Ba'al", even for the particular god, is "Lord." In the Canaanite/Punic world, all local (male) gods could be referred to with a prefix of Ba'al (females as Ba'alath or roughly "lady"). Therefore, it would be Ba'al of such a place, or Ba'al of such an event.

In addition, the written Ba'al cycle is primarily the "death and resurrected god story" for the Phoenicians, as told in so many different cultures, and is related to the harvest cycle. Perhaps none of these stories mentions human sacrifice, simply because often the stories take place prior to the "creation" of humans, or that humans were considered so insignificant, that they had nothing to do with the story per say; these stories were "business" between gods.

- So other than a mention of "earthly cities," humans played no part in the "particular god Ba'al" myth.

Therefore, the act of human sacrifice not appearing in the Ba'al cycle writings does not really answer the question if the Canaanite/Punic peoples sacrificed humans to this particular Ba'al, this son of Dagan, or to any other "Ba'al (since as we have seen, all male gods could be and often were called Ba'al.)

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection B - Question 1 - Was Human Sacrifice A Key Element Of Phoenician Religion?

To look for evidence of this rite of human sacrifice within Phoenician culture, we need to look at other “foundation stories;” those that actually include humans. Here, with the little evidence we have, we can show that the cultural foundation myths of the Phoenicians included a sacrifice which is very similar to the Christ story,

- So Cronus, whom the Phoenicians call Israel, being king of the land and having an only-begotten son called Jeoud (for in the Phoenician tongue Jeoud signifies ‘only begotten’), dressed him in royal robes and sacrificed him upon an altar in a time of war, when the country was in great danger from the enemy.” Frazer’s *Golden Bough* , Chapter 26 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/frazer/gb02600.htm>

Not all historians accept this story, nor do they accept that the practice of human sacrifice was part of the Phoenician culture.

Some of this controversy, and a major step forward in understanding that child sacrifice was, in fact, part of the norm of the religious life of Phoenicians, was potentially resolved with the discovery of the “Incirli” Stela in 1993 (See <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/nelc/stelasite/discovery.html>). The location (Incirli) where the writing was found is currently in Turkey, near the Syrian border. However, when written in the 9th Century BC it was a “marker” of a new boarder between to Ancient enemies, and gives to history something that had been missing, a documented proof of the use of human sacrifice in daily life.

- The Incirli Stela contains a lengthy text written on all four sides of the stone in standard Phoenician of the late 8th century BCE. It is a commemorative boundary inscription marking the successful end of a territorial struggle between the kings of Cilicia (Que) and Kummuh and the various allied powers, presumably over the territory where the monument was originally erected. <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/nelc/stelasite/zuck.html>

As in noted in the report on the Stela,

- Of particular importance for the cultural history of the Ancient Near East is the detailed discussion of the use of *mulk*-sacrifices of sheep, horses, and - if we read correctly - first-born humans in the process of the war, and the gods’ reactions to those sacrifices. Classical historians had attested to the Phoenician practice of child sacrifice in times of distress, and archaeological evidence for child sacrifice has been found at Carthage and other Punic locations. However, the connection between the *mulk*-sacrifice and the sacrifice of humans has never been documented in a Phoenician text before, and many scholars have doubted the existence of the practice.
- This inscription provides that missing connection with apparent references to the *mulk* of a man, or a firstborn son. In addition, our inscription may clarify the meaning of the

biblical practice of “passing children through fire” for *molekh*.... Although some scholars question the connection between the Punic practice of *mulk*-sacrifice and the biblical “cult of *Molech*” it is our belief that the Incirli inscription can provide insight into the conceptual underpinnings of a number of important ideas, narratives, and practices mentioned the Bible, including the prohibitions against “passing children through fire” for *molekh*. <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/nelc/stelasite/zuck.html>

Here is evidence of the use of the human sacrifice of the third type (to solidify a contract)

So while there appears to be better evidence that sacrifice did occur (in this case for a new covenant), the issue becomes more complicated when we consider the term “mulk” or “Mlk” or “*Molech*” that is noted in the Stele. Again, there is great debate on the meaning of this term, and if the term refers to an action, or a god. Some historians consider the term a reference to a particular god, and some see it as a particular type of sacrifice, in particular the human sacrifice (passing through the fire). Yet others consider it a process of cleansing, or purification, which is similar to a human sacrifice, but stops short of actual killing.

- **Moloch, Molech or Molekh**, representing Hebrew מֶלֶךְ *mlk*, (translated directly into king) is either the name of a god or the name of a particular kind of sacrifice associated historically with [Phoenician](#) and related cultures in north [Africa](#) and the [Levant](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moloch>

The term, like Ba'al, has many possible meanings in different possible contexts, and leads to the great debates among current thinkers.

- *Moloch* has been traditionally interpreted as the name of a god, possibly a god titled *the king*, but purposely misvocalized as *Molek* instead of *Melek* using the vowels of Hebrew *bosheth* ‘shame’.
- All other references to *Moloch* use *mlk* only in the context of “passing children through fire *lmlk*”, whatever is meant by *lmlk*, whether it means “to Moloch” or means something else. It has traditionally been understood to mean burning children alive to the god Moloch. But some have suggested a rite of purification by fire instead, though perhaps a dangerous one. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moloch>

Otto Eissfeldt, based on his work in Carthage, in the Early 20th Century concluded:

- that the Hebrew writings were not talking about a god Moloch at all, but about the *mol*k or *mulk* sacrifice, that the abomination (cited by the prophets) was not in worshipping a god Molech who demanded children be sacrificed to him, but in the practice of sacrificing human children as a *mol*k. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moloch>

The graphic representation we have of the Moloch process starts to show us some of the origins of the Devil and the relationship of the modern view of the Devil to the practice of “passing through the fire” and the image of the God with the body of a man and the head of a bull, or at least nowadays the horns of a bull.



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fd/Molok.jpg>

Our ability to come to a clear understanding of the rites and how much it did or did not occur, is much confused by the lack of original text and the confusion over the very meaning of terms and acts. However, while in some historic sectors the debate rages if the Phoenicians did or did not sacrifice children in a ritual process, it appears that the likelihood is very high they did so ... (for a full discussion on the pro's and con's in this debate, please see <http://phoenicia.org/childsacrifice.html>)

As pointed out by Drs. **Lawrence E. Stager and Joseph A. Greene**

- The evidence that Phoenicians ritually sacrificed their children comes from four sources. Classical authors and biblical prophets charge the Phoenicians with the practice. Stelae associated with burial urns found at Carthage bear decorations alluding to sacrifice and inscriptions expressing vows to Phoenician deities. Urns buried beneath these stelae contain remains of children (and sometimes of animals) who were cremated as described in the sources or implied by the inscriptions. <http://phoenicia.org/childsacrifice.html>

Again, other sources state that the evidence is there to support the idea that Phoenicians did sacrifice their children, but not quite enough to make solid statements:

(The Punic) People attempted to influence the gods through animal sacrifices, petitions, and vows (promises of gifts contingent on the deity's response to a request for help). Sacrifice was central to the cult. Domestic animals were the main victims—cattle, sheep, and goats—and also birds. There is clear evidence for two types of sacrifice: simple gifts and whole burned offerings. There also is scattered evidence of human sacrifice, probably limited to situations of unusual extremity.)

<http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/geoghist/histories/oldcivilization/phoenicia/phoenicianreligion/pagan/pagan.html>

In closing their paper, Stager and Greene make a major point, that needs to be thought about throughout the reading this book

- The classical and biblical texts, as well as the archaeology, all indicate that healthy living children were sacrificed to the gods in the Tophet. Our purpose in making this case is not to malign the Phoenicians but to understand them.

Even the term of Tophet has come to have multiple meanings and we need to be careful again how and when we use it.

- **Tophet** is a location near [Jerusalem](#) where according to the Bible, the [Canaanites sacrificed children](#) to the god [Moloch](#) by [burning them alive](#). It is thought to be a specific geographic location within the valley of [Gehenna](#).
- The name is possibly derived from the Hebrew *toph* = drum, because drums were used to drown the cries of children; or from the Hebrew *taph* or *toph* = to burn. ... Tophet became a synonym for [hell](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tophet>

(Here again, please note the association with the worship of Ba'al and the evolution of the concept of Hell - souls being burned for eternity in a deep place controlled by a god with horns)

Also ... Tophet, based on the Gehenna tradition, was adopted in modern times (by Otto Eissfeldt) to give a name to the multiple sites in various Phoenician settlements throughout the Mediterranean (including Carthage) where graveyards with large numbers of young children were found. It has also come to mean the dead children, or the element of sacrifice, itself.

Therefore, the term Tophet is now used to describe, in modern writings multiple things, including:

- A location of a human sacrifice, the act of sacrifice (the passing through fire), the remains of the act of sacrifice, and the burial location of those sacrificed.

Again, despite confusion on terminology, our actual evidence of child sacrifice in the writing of the time is limited; Philo of Byblos, who wrote a History of the Phoenicians around A.D. 100, and reported that child sacrifice was customary among the Phoenicians, in times of national danger,

- 'The Phoenicians sacrificed their dearest children in a mysterious fashion.' Carthage similarly has a reputation for the sacrificial burning of children sometimes, according to Diodorus even with a great scaffold in which a many-armed sculpture in the form of a god tipped the child sacrifices into a flaming pyre http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Carthage

Modern writers have a hard time accepting this practice, but some do make the connection to the worship of Ba'al.

... [H]uman sacrifice did occur in Phoenician cults Child sacrifice has been attested for in the Bible and was practiced by the Canaanites; its existence is also suggested by many sarcophagi and stelae in [Carthage](#). Although child sacrifice was forbidden in Tyre after the conquests of [Alexander the Great](#), it was still practiced in Carthage in the second century BCE. It can not be excluded that this practice also continued to be performed in [Syria/Phoenicia, after the Greek conquest] <http://www.livius.org/he->

hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion.html

- As we will see, the Roman Emperor Elagabalus learned his personal religious beliefs some 500 years after Alexander, and they included the rite of human sacrifice to Ba'al.

Here we see that the Phoenicians were involved in the practice until the arrival of the Greeks who attempted to forcibly repress the practice (as did the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile, some 200 years before Alexander)

- The reaction to both repressions by those who believed in the rite of human sacrifice, followed the four types we have discussed earlier and will have a major impact on the story of this book

As noted, the origins of the practice in Phoenicia, according to ancient writings is based on an event sounding similar to the life of Jesus, but is attributed to have taken place some 8000 years ago, (or 6,000 years before Jesus) with the founding of Byblos

Again this is from Philo of Byblos's history, which he claimed as a "modern translation" (meaning one he did about 100 AD), of a text that he dated to well earlier than 1200 BC and was authored by one Sanchoniatho. To complicate matters further, we have very little of Philo's actual writing left, and rely on a translation developed by 4th Century Christian Bishop, Eusebius of Caesarea <http://www.answers.com/topic/eusebius-of-caesarea> So here is a translation of a translation of Sanchoniatho writing in 1200 BC referring to the "customs of the Ancients" meaning events that took place some 5000 years before his lifetime. Needless to say, many moderns have questioned the validity of the writings. However;

- Much of what has been preserved in this writing (Philo's text) concerning areas other than human sacrifice, ..turned out to be supported by the [Ugaritic](#) mythological texts excavated at [Ras Shamra](#) (ancient [Ugarit](#)) in [Syria](#) since [1929](#). This gives us some better justification to support the assertion that the translation of the translation does seem to fairly represent genuine Semitic elements, some which had remained unchanged since the [2nd millennium BC](#).

So, real or not, this is the statement of Eusebius's translation of Philo's translation of Sanchoniatho: For more background please see <http://www.answers.com/topic/sanchuniathon>

It was the custom among the ancients, in times of great calamity, in order to prevent the ruin of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging deities the most beloved of their children as the price of redemption: they who were devoted this purpose were offered mystically.

For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.—Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. THE THEOLOGY OF THE PHŒNICIANS: FROM SANCHONIATHO.

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

Or, in other words, the origins of the sacrifice of the children goes back to a story of how God implanted his “seed” in a young girl, and later had that child declared king, and in a time of crisis, for the good of all, sacrificed him; seems to be a familiar story.

So, while we have limited original sources on human sacrifice by the Phoenicians, one thing which is clear, especially for the development of the concept of human sacrifice “morphing into other elements” is that the Bible also states that the Phoenicians/Canaanites practiced the act. (Remembering that the Canaanites and the Phoenicians are, if not the same (brothers) at least they are first cousins.

Again, as stated before, the King of Moab (Mesha) sacrificed his son right in front of the Israeli armies, causing the Israelites to retreat in panic.

2 Kings 3:26 “And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall.

Also, we read that the king of Bethel sacrificed his child when building his city.

(1 Kings 16:34).Hiel of Bethel “built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub”

In addition, there are numerous references in the Bible to the Canaanite practices of the act of “passing through the fire” which, while modern scholars debate, clearly appears to be the biblical euphemism for child sacrifice.

Since we will explore how the early Christians may have incorporated elements of human sacrifice into their new religion, we need to pay attention to pertinent references in the Bible:

- in God’s discussions with Moses concerning the proper way to sacrifice to God, and also what was wrong with the ways of the Canaanites (as seen extensively in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and
- in what was done by the evil kings of Judah and Israel (as seen in Chronicles and Kings, the issue of human sacrifice was prominent in the Bible.

Therefore, if from no other source, all the early Christians thinkers were knowledgeable in the Old Testament, and they would have been very aware of the rite of human sacrifice, and the use by peoples of the Bible, and the condemnation of it by God. In fact, these early Christians would have been well aware of the statements in the Old Testament that the practice of human sacrifice was in fact the cause of God’s punishment of the old kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the reason for the ultimate destruction of the “chosen people.” And if from no other sources, these early Christian writers, would have clearly been convinced that the Phoenicians did in fact practice the ritual, since it was repeated that they did so often in the Hebrew Bible.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection C - Question 2 - Was the Phoenician influence on Child Sacrifice present within the Hebrew/Israelite/Judean Community?

Again, in the beginning of this segment, we need to restate that the Canaanites and the Phoenicians were basically the same people. (In addition, much of modern scholarship feels that the Hebrews/Israelites/ Judeans were also of the same origins, but who, for one reason or another, formed an allegiance to “Yahweh”, or maybe better stated as “Ba’al Yahweh” as opposed to other “Ba’als.” However, regardless of the origins of the Hebrews, we can say that when the Bible is referring to the gods of the Canaanites, they are also referring to the same basic religion and gods as the religion and gods of the Phoenicians.

Here, we get a little less controversy in modern historical thought; it appears that current non-religious researchers tend to agree that the Phoenician influence on the Hebrews/Israelites was great.

- The religion of the god Baal was widely accepted among the ancient Jews, and although it was put down at times, it was never permanently stamped out. Kings and other royalty of the ten Biblical tribes worshiped the god. The ordinary people ardently worshipped this sun god too because their prosperity depended on the productivity of their crops and livestock. The god’s images were erected on many buildings. Within the religion there appeared to be numerous priests and various classes of devotees. During the ceremonies they wore appropriate robes. The ceremonies included burning incense, and offering burnt sacrifices, occasionally consisting of human victims. The officiating priests danced around the altars, chanting frantically and cutting themselves with knives to inspire the attention and compassion of the god.
<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/b/baal.html>
- As the Canaanites and the Israelites began to live in closer contact with each other, the faith of Israel tended to absorb some of the concepts and practices of the Canaanite religion. Some Israelites began to name their children after the Baalism; even one of the judges, Gideon, was also known by the name Jerubbaal (“Let Baal Contend”).
http://history-world.org/canaanite_culture_and_religion.htm

And with that understanding, and if we can rely on the Bible as a source concerning this particular issue, we can clearly see from the biblical writings, that the answer to this question of Phoenician influence, with the issues of child sacrifice being one of the main components of the Phoenician culture and religion, is quite clear and affirming.

There is a lot of discussion of Canaanite and Phoenician culture in the Bible:

- There are approximately 89 references to the god Baal in the Old Testament (OT). Further, the OT makes reference to other Canaanite deities including the goddess Asherah (40 times) as well as the goddess Ashtoreth (10 times). In total, there appears to be about 139 clear references to major Canaanite deities in the OT. In a brief survey of the passages in which reference is made to Baal worship, such things are noted as the high places at which Baal worship occurred within Israel (e.g., Num 22:41), Israel’s

propensity for engaging in Baal worship at certain points in her history (cf. Judges 2:11; 3:7; 8:33; 10:6, 10, Hosea 2:13, etc.), as well as the cultic practices of certain Baal prophets (cf. 1 Kings 18:25-29). http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=2053

And even with the story of Isaac, in the Bible, there are, at least initially, no overt statements by God against the practice of human sacrifice. In fact, in the conversations with Moses, it seems that the practice is affirmed, with certain alternative options offered to the people.

For example, in the Bible in the discussions between God and Moses, we see the issue of whether children were to be sacrificed to God raised several times. And as is stated in the Bible, the conversation came quickly after the liberation from Egypt;

- Exodus 12:51: “the selfsame day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt ... the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine”
- Exodus 22:29 “For thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors; the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.”
- Exodus 34 “all that opens the womb is mine.” All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. No one shall appear before me empty
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/web.Exod.34.html>

So the demand from God for all the firsts of food and children came on the first day of freedom from Egypt. (And just days after the 10th plague where the first born of the Egyptians were killed?) Also, in these statements, only in the last verse (Exodus 34) does God give the Hebrews an “out” for human sacrifice, where he allows the sons to be “redeemed” (Orthodox Jews today continue to give money to the temple on the birth of a child to “redeem” that child as God had commanded).

- When this statement about “redemption” was added to the conversation is not clear. It may have always been present in the text and oral traditions or it may have been added as late as the Babylonian captivity. The historical record is just not clear enough to make a reliable statement on this verse

These conversations between Moses and God were supposed to have taken place at least 400 years after Isaac (We were slaves unto Pharaoh for 430 years) or when according to modern thinkers, the Hebrews traditionally stopped child sacrifice (as a result of the “binding of Isaac”). Yet the issue was still important enough 430 years later (a long time) for God and Moses to discuss it many times, and on the very day that they left Egypt. And in most the statements, God was clearly calling for the sacrifice to be made “whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel ... is mine”

- There are many discussions over the centuries of what this statement really meant, and was God really demanding a human sacrifice, or that the first sons had to be dedicated to the upkeep of the temple or such. In context of the time, without retrofitting the statements to suit modern tastes, it appears clear what God is requiring; a sacrifice of all first born.

However, in the historical timeline projected in the Bible, by the time the Hebrews reach the

promised land, the “line” on child sacrifice has changed. Again, however, it may be that the story line of the Bible is not right, since the book we find with the most to say against child sacrifice is Deuteronomy, and the date for that writing may not be at the beginning of the period of Judges, but more likely during the last days of the Kingdom of Judah, or some six hundred years later. However, what is said in that book is:

(Deuteronomy 12:31)

- You must not worship the Lord your God in their way because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

In addition, during the time of the Judges and later, we have extensive statements within the Bible to support and show that human sacrifice was practiced by the peoples of Israel and Judah, almost throughout their existence. And as the struggle for the “hearts and minds” of the peoples is conducted by the Prophets, the blame for these acts against Yahweh, or the acts of human sacrifice, are clearly placed on the religion of the Phoenicians/Canaanites.

But there is a strange statement (and perhaps an example of twisted logic) by God that not only did God know about the acts, he actually was requiring, and had been requiring the use human sacrifice, as a means to turn people away from the act, and to God. Part of the reason given for the act was that God admitted giving bad laws to the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews so that they could later understand good laws

[Ezekiel 20:23-26](#)

- Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the desert that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries, because they had not obeyed my laws but had rejected my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths, and their eyes lusted after their fathers’ idols.
- I also gave them over to statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by; I let them become defiled through their gifts - the sacrifice of every firstborn - that I might fill them with horror so they would know that I am the LORD.

This statement seems to be clearly a remarkable effort at “Stalinization” of history, and seems to be included at the time of the rewriting of the Bible to fit the new concept of Judaism that rejected the idea of human sacrifice as a needed, and required, act. Here in Ezekiel, there is a clear admission that God had demanded human sacrifice, in order to help the people reject the concept of human sacrifice (to save the village we had to destroy the village) ... But the plan seems to have not worked as the people used the “statutes” more and more ... (And is this quote saying the Ten Commandments were not good and laws that “could not live by?” It is not clear what these other laws were.)

- As is well know, there are multiple contradictions in the Bible, and most can not be discussed or reconciled in this effort. However, I want to point out one concerning the issue of human sacrifice. The point is that while in the book of *Ezekiel* God is stating that he ordered child sacrifice to make people not want to do such a thing, and in other places, God states he never considered human sacrifice as a thing that was good or wanted.

(Jeremiah 19:4-6)

- For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They have built me the high places of Ba'al to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Ba'al - something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of ben Hinnom, but the Valley of slaughter.

But regardless, the statements of Ezekiel and Jeremiah seem to state that child sacrifice, and the influence of "Ba'alism," was an important part of religious practice among the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews many hundred of years after the Exodus, and was not resolved even until the end of the "Kingships." Often we read of the Prophets condemning the Jews for following the ways of Ba'al (i.e. sacrificed their children to God.)

- Ezekiel 16:20, 21 And you took your sons and your daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and made them pass through (the fire) to the idols.
- Jer. 19:4 They had forsaken their God to serve other gods even to the extent that they would sacrifice their own children spilling "the blood of the innocent"

We clearly see, by simply reading the Biblical histories, that despite the conversation with God and the commandments against the act, human sacrifice took place during the period of "judges" and most of the kings of the Israel and of Judah were condemned by prophets for following the religion of the Canaanites." For example

- Judges 11:30 "And 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.' (His daughter was the first one, and was duly killed (and she was "canonized" by the females of Israel) and
- In 2 Samuel 21:1 we read that in response to a famine, David hanged seven men, to appease God and ask him to end the famine. Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, whom the Lord did choose. And the king said, I will give them... and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.
- Even the great and wise king Solomon " built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.(1 Kings 11, 7-8)
- Ahaz, the king of Judah (8th century B.C.): "even burned his son as an offering, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel" (2 Kings 16:3).
- The same is told of King Manasseh (7th century B.C.) in 2 Kings 21:6.

It is in fact Solomon's adherence to other gods (and to the practice of Molech) that causes

God to split the great kingdom and save only the tribe of Judah for the descendents of David:

I Kings II

- 31 Then he said to Jeroboam, “Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon’s hand and give you ten tribes. 32 But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe. 33 I will do this because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molech the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my statutes and laws as David, Solomon’s father, did.

(Please again note that Sidon is officially Phoenician, but the other Canaanite cities are of Phoenician culture as well)

But soon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the one where the worship of God was supposed to be preserved, becomes dominated by Ba’al worship under the control of the Queen Jezebel, who was a Phoenician princess, and who dominates Israel through her husband and two sons who also became kings. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jezebel_\(biblical\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jezebel_(biblical))

- I Kings xvi. 31 Ahab “took as a wife Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and he went and served the Baal and worshiped him; and he set up an altar to the Baal in the house of Baal which he had built in Samaria.”

All efforts to repress the practices, even with claims of great victories over the Ba’alist, seem not to stop the continuing practices and worship.

In 2 Kings 10:18-25 we read of the successor of Ahab killing all of the Ba’al worshipers in Israel, only later to have them back again stronger than ever.

- 18 Then Jehu gathered all the people and said to them, “Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much.
- 19 “Now, summon all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers and all his priests; let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal; whoever is missing shall not live.” But Jehu did it in cunning, so that he might destroy the worshipers of Baal. ...
- 21 Then Jehu sent throughout Israel and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. And when they went into the house of Baal, the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other. ...
- 24 Then they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had stationed for himself eighty men outside, and he had said, “The one who permits any of the men whom I bring into your hands to escape shall give up his life in exchange.”
- 25 Then it came about, as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard, and to the royal officers, Go in, kill them; let none come out.” And they killed them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the royal officers threw them out, and went to the inner room of the house of Baal.

Again, we are faced with a problem in understanding what is being said in the Bible about this

action. When it says that Solomon and others worshiped and/or offered Moloch, it is still debated as if it was worship to a particular god or a particular type of worship. But in both cases, the god worship or the particular action is associated with child sacrifice.

- According to some sources, the Moloch in the Old Testament is not a god, but a specific form of sacrifice.
- The sun god of the Canaanites (Ammonites?) in old Palestine is sometimes associated with the Sumerian [Baal](#), although Moloch (or Molekh) was entirely malevolent. In the 8th-6th century BCE, firstborn children were sacrificed to him by the Israelites in the Valley of Hinnom, south-east of Jerusalem (see also [Gehenna](#)). These sacrifices to the sun god were made to renew the strength of the sun fire.
- Moloch was represented as a huge bronze statue with the head of a bull. The statue was hollow, and inside there burned a fire which colored the Moloch a glowing red. Children were placed on the hands of the statue. Through an ingenious system the hands were raised to the mouth (as if Moloch were eating) and the children fell into the fire where they were consumed by the flames. The people gathered before the Moloch were dancing on the sounds of flutes and tambourines to drown out the screams of the victims. <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/moloch.html>

It is during the reign of Jezebel (and her two sons) that Elijah has his famous confrontation with 950 prophets of Baal and Asherah, and one of the few noted successes in the Bible of the Prophets of Yahweh winning when in conflict with the prophets of Baal.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_%28prophet%29#Challenge_to_Baal Yet despite the great victory, it was Elijah who had to flee for his life and go into hiding in the wilderness (and there he saw God in the “small voice.”)

And in the North we see a real blending of the cult of Ba'al and Yahweh:

- The evil became all the worse when in the popular view Yhwh himself was regarded as one of the Ba'als and the chief of them (Hosea ii. 16). It was in northern Israel, where agriculture was more followed than in the southern kingdom, that Ba'al-Worship was most insidious and virulent. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=2&letter=B>

And, even when the overt statement is not given about child sacrifice, and Phoenician influence on both kingdoms, the implication in the Bible is clear. For example, as we have seen both David and Solomon built temples to the gods of other countries and the practices of these gods were followed. The ritual of human sacrifice was part of these rituals for these gods. And the tradition continued throughout most the Kingdom of Judah, with the exception of during the reign of a few “reformer” kings.

In Judah, the sacrifices of children took place in the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem, (today it is still called the Valley of Fire). Despite the death penalty for doing so (Leviticus 20.2–5), Jews continued to practice the sacrificial rites of Ba'al at this site.

Jeremiah 32.35:

And they built the high places of the Ba'al, which are in the valley of Ben-hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire Mo'lech; which I did not

command them, nor did it come into my mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

Kings 2 23.10 shows a later reforming king, Josiah, attempting to repress the actions

And he defiled the Tophet which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom so no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire Mo'lech. (to be sacrificed)

One needs to ask the question, that if the practice was not going on, why would the king take the action and why was it so note worthy that it made it into the Old Testament.

- Also the concept of the valley where “souls are tortured with fire” gives us the modern concept of Hell (and presented so in the New Testament as Gehenna). The “god” to which these souls were condemned was none other then Ba'al, (soon the very model of the Devil.)

Jeremiah 7 is a clear indication that the people of Judea were mostly worshiping other gods in addition to or as a substitute for Yahweh.

- 9 “ ‘Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known,
- 17 Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18 The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger.
- 30 “ ‘The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the LORD. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. 31 They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind. 32 So beware, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer call it Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. 33

And next Jeremiah uses a term meant to insult, but in later years became a rallying cry for many oppressed Jews (a stiff-necked people) ...

- 26 But they did not listen to me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers.’

Also, the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, following traditional time lines, took place close to 800 years after God’s conversations with Moses, and more than 400 years after the time of David, and 125 years after the fall of Israel. Even during this siege, according to the prophets in the Bible, the Jews were still sacrificing their children in an offering to God to lift the siege. (Again, covering a very long time in history).

- 2nd Chronicles 36 - 11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. 12 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD.... . 14 Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more

and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. 15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

It is hard to put in to this process of examination a quote from *Deuteronomy*, since, as we will see, there is some debate about when and who wrote this book. However, as stated, God was demanding an end to this practice:

- Deuteronomy 12:31 "Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods."

And when no end to human sacrifice came, God took action:

- 17 He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

Therefore, we can see that from the story of Abraham through to the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, child sacrifice was a practice that was common, and not successfully repressed, by the Prophets of Yahweh, for at least 2000 years (a very long time).

- And throughout this period the blame was put on Israel and Judah for following the fashion of the Canaanites and the Phoenicians.

And clearly the statement in Jeremiah shows that, according to the Bible, the sins of the Judean kings and people concerning human sacrifice were so great that God could not forgive them.

2 Kings 21

10 Now the LORD spoke through His servants the prophets, saying,

- 5 For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.
- 6 He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking Him to anger.
- 11 "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols;
- 12 therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am bringing such calamity on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle.'

- 13'I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.
- 14'I will abandon the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they will become as plunder and spoil to all their enemies;

Jeremiah 15:4

- 4"I will make them an object of horror among all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.

As we will see, in exile, the Jews accept the premise of the prophets that they rejected as the events unfurled. The blame for the fall of the two kingdoms came more and more to focus on the worship of other gods by the Israelites and the Judeans, and the statements in Jeremiah and others focusing on the "sin of human sacrifice." This acceptance led to, among many other events during the Exile, a writing, or rewriting, of the Bible, to create a strong abhorrent to the common practice of child sacrifice, and the rejection of some 2000 years of sharing a common practice with their Canaanite relatives.

So to paraphrase George Orwell from *1984* the exile leaders rewrote the Bible in such a way as to say

- God does not want the first born (human sacrifice). God has never wanted the first born, and God will never want the first born son sacrificed to him. And;
- The true Jewish leaders, (the Patriarchs and the good kings) had never sacrificed their sons, do not sacrifice their sons, and will never sacrifice their sons to God.

(The reference in *1984*, is every time the partners in the war switched, the "Ministry of Truth" eliminated all references to the previous alliances, so "We have always been at war with Eurasia" etc, is one of the lines near the end of the book showing the absolute power of the state to rewrite history as it chooses)

This abhorrence to human sacrifice becomes a cornerstone of the new religion established among the exiles, Judaism; but a religion not completely shared (as we will see) by the survivors of the Babylonian invasion, who were not taken away into exile for seventy years. Their concepts of Judaism or better stated Yahwehism, remained tied to the religion practiced by the pre-conquest populations, or as we have seen, a religion integrated with other gods, and therefore quite loyal to the concepts of child sacrifice. And after the "exile" and the return of the "new Jews" from Babylon, these remnant peoples found this new Judaism "strange", and did not accept the new religion and fought to keep the new temple from being built, for they saw it as being built for a new, alien, religion.

- The returning peoples eventually won out, at least in the area near Jerusalem, and this success led to the establishment of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. This Jewish state pushed greatly to preserve "God's love" by repressing all appearance and references to human sacrifice, including, as we will see later, the tactic of "forced conversion" of the remnant peoples.

One of the strong holds of the "remnant culture," the culture unaffected by the years in

Babylon, was in the north of Canaan, around the Sea of Galilee, from which sprung the “Jesus movement.” This area was only force converted to the new Judaism at roughly 100 BC, a relatively short time before the Christ story.

As we know from so many other studies, religions and religious practices do not simply go away, they “evolve” and “morph” into other rituals and stories. It just does not seem practical or rational that the dominant religion in the area for over 2000 years, Ba’alism, and its ritual of child sacrifice, would be the sole exception to this fact, and simply disappear.

- The story of Jesus seems to have quickly taken on the trappings of not just the dying and rising gods of many other cultures, but the trappings of the specific Phoenician/Canaanite God (Chronus, EL) having sex with a virgin, having a beloved son by this young girl, and in time of troubles, having him presented as a king, and then killed.
- The Jews knew of this sequence as a 6000 year old story, with its origin and concept as being directly from the Phoenician/Canaanite culture against which they had so long fought.

The Jews of the time saw this Jesus story as a new infusion into Judaism of the very concepts, according to the new Jews, which led to the destruction of the temple and exile and the elimination of the covenant with God; the Jesus story was Ba’alism, or the Story of El and his beloved son, retold. Therefore, it should seem quite clear why Jews rejected the whole story of Jesus, as it evolved into the story of “child sacrifice” by other means. As such it represented the very thing that Jews saw as the cause for God’s wrath, and the destruction of the Israelite kingdoms.

From this perspective the rejection of Jesus by the Jews of the time had less to do with accepting Jesus as the new “messiah” but rejecting Jesus as the old, very old, story of the origins of human sacrifice in the Canaanite culture; the old story, retold of what God hated most.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection D - Question 2 - Part B - Interlude on Isaac

Before going on to discuss the Phoenicians' spread of child sacrifice, we need to have a far greater discussion of an event that is central to Judaism and later a major element in the development and justification of Christianity; the "binding" and non-sacrifice of Isaac.

This event is perhaps the most written about and discussed section of the Old Testament and, the passage most often read in Jewish pray services.

- Seven days a week, twelve months a year, the story of the Akeidah is read and prayed over in the morning prayer service. It is also the second Torah reading for Rosh HaShanna and, of course, it occurs once in the regular cycle. All together, that makes a total of 367 times a year that the devoutly observant Jew reads this story! No other Scripture narrative is so often read, recited and prayed over as Genesis 22.
<http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

I cannot do it justice to discuss the whole event in great detail, but only to suggest the following; most people in modern times see this acceptance by Abraham to sacrifice his child as God truly testing Abraham and Abraham truly showing his love for God.

- But, perhaps we should look at this "near sacrifice" differently, based on our understanding of what was "normal practices of the time."

The actual "time" of the Abraham story is not made clear by the Bible, but it is clearly in the early days of the Hebrews, at least 1700 BC (according to traditional dating). It could, however, be much older. Based on Phoenician writings that we have and on the folk tales of the period, sacrificing the first born appears to be normal in those times, especially as part of the bargain between man and God concerning a "deal" (one of the three types of human sacrifice).

And God and Abram (later Abraham) did make a deal, both when God told him to leave his home (Gen 12 -2), and when he got to the "promised land" (Gen 12-7)

Gen 12 -

- 2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you"
- 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land"

God actually "upped" the bargain after Abraham complained of having no son, and that his possessions would pass to a servant, Eliezer of Damascus (Gen 15:2) (why not Lot??).

Gen 15:17

- "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates- the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."

God even increased the allocation later, after the “binding” took place.

The deal, prior to the binding, was “sealed” with sacrifices of animals, and according to the times, this was standard practice.

- The entire encounter between Abraham and Yahweh in this passage is summarized in the statement, “Yahweh cut a covenant with Abram.” In biblical language, “to cut a covenant” refers to the animals that were ceremonially cut in half. Cutting animals in a covenant ceremony may have been a traditional practice. ... The cutting of the animals and passing between the pieces is ritualized self-condemnation, invoking mutilation and death on oneself if one is disloyal to the covenant. Here the cutting ritual was used to assure Yahweh’s grant of offspring and land. Land boundaries were typically specified in charter covenants..

http://www.hope.edu/bandstra/RTOT/CH2/CH2_1A2.HTM

So it appears that as part of the “standard operating procedures” of the time the request by God to have Abraham sacrifice his child was not out of line with those times. But, before this sacrifice there were other requests by God for blood and cutting.

- In Gen 17, God (after changing the names of both Abraham and Sarah) orders that all males be circumcised to seal the deal of the new promise of greatness for the descendants of Abraham. (An act short of castration, which was also connected to religious deals during that time.) Also circumcision was a practice long undertaken by the Canaanites and not a new thing created by God for the Hebrews.

And in fact, in the Bible, when God makes his request for additional sacrifice, the sacrifice of his son Isaac, Abraham makes no objections.

(By the way, in the Koran, the son to be sacrificed is not named, and therefore the Muslims claim it was in fact the first born Ishmael who was taken by Abraham to be killed).

It simply states in Gen 22 that God ordered it and Abraham went to do it. We have no statements of concern or anguish on the part of Abraham. These types of feelings are modern interpretations concerning the “binding of Isaac.” (as George C. Scott portrays in the movie “*The Bible*”) In simply reading the story, Abraham accepts this request of God as “standard” for the time, and simply goes forth to comply.

The only one who is given some credit, later, for expressing any feelings about the sacrifice is Sarah; when she hears of the sacrifice, she drops dead. But that is not from the Bible itself, only later traditions.

The [Rabbis](#) also taught that the reason for the death of [Sarah](#) was the news of intended [sacrifice](#) of Isaac <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac>

Perhaps, after the first round of sacrificing of animals, and the sacrifice involved in the circumcision events, Abram (Abraham) thought that this God was a new kind of god, a god that did not require child sacrifice. But when asked to give his son’s life to seal the deal, perhaps Abraham thought, “Oh well, same type of God as all the other Gods” and went about the business of sacrificing his child, as part of the “covenant process.”

- It is stated in Exodus that at this time Abraham knew Yahweh as “El” which was the

chief god of the Canaanites. Therefore, at least this understanding would give a basis as to why Abraham would expect requirements of God to be the same requirements of the Canaanites.

- Exodus 6:3 “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty. (In Hebrew El Shaddai). but by My name Jehovah (Yahweh) was I not known to them.

This statement that Abraham worshiped “God” as “El” was made even more confusing with the discovery of the Phoenician texts in Ugaritic.

- There is one Ugaritic text which seems to indicate that among the inhabitants of Ugarit, Yahweh was viewed as another son of El. KTU 1.1 IV 14 says:

sm . bny . yw . ilt or “The name of the son of god, Yahweh.”

This text seems to show that Yahweh was known at Ugarit, though not as the chief lord (or Ba'al) but as one of the many sons of El, or Ba'al Yahweh, son of El.

<http://www.theology.edu/ugarbib.htm>

This text indicates that the rivalry between Yahweh and Ba'al (the actual god, not just the title) is far more ancient than the time of Abraham. (Here we have two gods, one the son of El, and the other the son of Hadad in rivalries with each other.)

However, for the purposes of this book, the key question we need to consider is whether in fact Abraham did sacrifice Isaac or, as in the “current version” of the story, he was stopped in time. There are ancient traditions that he did in fact kill his son, and it seems that this version of the events was the dominant story and belief, until the time when the anti-human sacrificial party of the Jews came to power, and rewrote these segments of the Bible.

- This change in the story may have happened at the time of the destruction of Kingdom of Israel, or at the time of the Babylonian captivity, or even later. It is unclear since we have so little writing available from the time.

But even with the shift and the condemnation of human sacrifice, the writers (or should we say, rewriters) of the Bible could not purge the whole text of its references and admission of the practice for more than 1000 years after the latest estimates for the time of Abraham (a very long time for a folk myth to exist.).

My assertion that the sacrifice of Isaac was completed as the accepted form of making the deal with God, and could have actually taken place, is not new. For example, in the 1930's Rabbi J. H. Hertz, The Chief Rabbi of the British Empire stated that child sacrifice actually “rife among the Semitic peoples,” and suggests that “in that age, it was astounding that Abraham's God should have interposed *to prevent* the sacrifice, not that He should have asked for it.”

- Hertz interprets the *Akedah* (the binding) as demonstrating to the Jews that human sacrifice is abhorrent. “Unlike the cruel heathen deities, *it was the spiritual surrender alone that God required.*” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Near_sacrifice_of_Isaac

There are also discussions, in Ancient writings, in the Talmud, of this possibility that Isaac

was sacrificed, and died. These stories also talked about the “resurrection” of Isaac, either directly after the event, or possible three years later (after living in Paradise for three years)

- One of the interesting strands of tradition about the Aqedah is the notion that Isaac actually died and was sacrificed. In this version, the usual understanding is that Isaac was then raised from the dead and praised God for raising him.
<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rs/002/Midrash.html>
- Also in the Midrash there are other stories where Isaac died on the altar. As soon as Abraham’s knife reached Isaac’s neck, his soul departed. Even if only for a short instant, Isaac died. Then when the Angel of the LORD called out to Abraham, staying his hand, Isaac’s soul was returned to him.
<http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>
- R. Judah says: When the sword touched Isaac’s throat his soul flew clean out of him. And when He let His voice be heard from between the cherubim, “Lay not thy hand upon the lad.” The lad’s soul was returned to his body. Then his father unbound him and Isaac rose, knowing that in this way the dead would come back to life in the future; whereupon he began to recite, “Blessed are You, LORD, who resurrects the dead.” (Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer) <http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

As we can imagine, much of the original intent of the story can be lost in the translation from Hebrew into Greek, never mind, English. With translation, the original meaning of words can be lost over time as culture changed. (Was it a “virgin” or a “young girl” spoken about in *Isaiah*?) When trying to understand the Isaac story in Hebrew and in its own time and culture, we see significant possibilities that the story is actually a recounting of the tale as an actual sacrifice to the Canaanite gods (to El).

The first of these is how God refers to Isaac in the Hebrew text:

- God calls **Isaac** an *olah* (“burnt offering”): “...God tested **Abraham**...’Take your son, the only one you love, Isaac...Bring him as an *olah* (an **all-burned offering**)...’...
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korban>

The child, as burnt offering, is how the child sacrifice was offered to the God of the Canaanites, and later referred to in the Bible for human sacrifices.

In addition, the term used for God in this section is “Elohim” which as we will see is actual the chief name of the God of the Canaanites and the Phoenicians, “El.” (which is actually the plural form of “El” or meaning many Gods or many Ba’als)

- And it came to pass after these things, that God (Elohim) tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham; and he said, ‘Behold, here I am.’ And He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you. [Genesis 22:1-2]
- And the angel of God (the Lord or Ba’al) called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham.’ And he said, ‘Here am I.’ And he said, ‘Lay not your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God (Elohim), seeing that you did not withhold your son, your only son, from me.’ [Genesis 22:11-12]
http://www.aish.com/torahportion/moray/The_Binding.asp

In addition, as stated in Exodus, it is clear that Abraham (as he is presented in the Bible) did not know the name of “Yahweh” but only the name “El” for God. Therefore, Abraham was sacrificing to El, and child sacrifice to El was normal and standard for the time.

(By the way, the name of God, as used to avoid saying the sacred name (Yahweh”) and used throughout most of the Bible, has been translated into Greek as Adonai, which means “lord”. It is also the direct translation of “Ba’al”

Jews also call God Adonai, Hebrew for “Lord” (Hebrew: אֲדֹנָי). Formally, this is plural (“my Lords”), but the plural is usually construed as a respectful, and not a syntactic plural. (The singular form is *Adoni*, “my lord”.) This was used by the Phoenicians for the god Tammuz and is the origin of the Greek name Adonis. Jews only use the singular to refer to a distinguished person.)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_God_in_Judaism

Therefore, in the Bible, in this story of Isaac, and in general, God, is most often referred to by two key Canaanite names for God, El and Lord (Ba’al).

In addition, there are several other aspects of the story of Isaac that seem to make little sense unless viewed in the “time” and in retelling an actual sacrifice, including:

That God blesses Abraham for willingness to do the act (Gen 22:16), which states that the act was in fact something that was doable and acceptable.

- “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven.”

But more important to many scholars is that Abraham goes up the mountain with Isaac, but returns alone.

- “So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.” (Genesis 22:19)

This has bewildered sages for centuries. How come Abraham and Isaac “go up” together, but only Abraham came down, and then he goes home alone. Many “traditions” were developed concerning this lack of Isaac in the “return.”

- Two contradicting traditions explain Isaac’s absence. The most widely accepted and well known explanation is that Isaac remained in Salem to study under Melchizedek. However, there is another tradition which explains his absence as follows:
 - And Isaac, Where was he? The Holy One, blessed be He, brought him into the Garden of Eden, and there he stayed three years. (Midrash Hagadol)
 - After the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, Abraham returned to Beer-Sheba, the scene of so many of his joys. Isaac was carried to Paradise by angels, and there he sojourned for three years. Thus Abraham returned home alone. (Ginzberg) <http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

In other words in these traditions, Isaac died and went to Paradise. Part of the Tradition states that Isaac stays in Paradise until he meets Rebekah (quite a while later).

- “And Isaac came from the way of Beer-le-hai-roi . . . And Isaac went out . . .” From where did he go out? From Paradise. No wonder Rebekah lost her equilibrium as it says “and she fell from the camel” -for what she perceived was Isaac coming down from Paradise . . .” (Minchat Yehudah)

<http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

In addition, unlike Abraham and Jacob and Joseph, Isaac becomes almost a non-entity in the Bible, appearing infrequently after the “sacrifice” event. Starting with the fact that he does not appear to return from the mountain with Abraham, Isaac as a man, is almost unimportant in the story of the Bible. He and Abraham never interact again after the trip to the mountain. And Isaac almost disappears from the Bible, except to get a wife and have children (and to also have the younger one inherent again.) There are no stories of great battles, dramatic rescues or destroyed cities, or discussions with God or even wrestling with angels or any type of major event associated with his life. The Isaac of the Bible almost does not exist (and perhaps he didn’t, after the sacrifice).

By the way ... the current folk image we have of Abraham taking a “child” to the mountain is also not consistent with the writing in the Bible. This has been pointed out for thousands of years, but has not been adopted into our current “folk culture” which almost always shows Isaac as a child.

- According to [Josephus](#), Isaac is twenty-five years old at the time of the sacrifice, while the [Talmudic](#) sages teach that Isaac is thirty-seven. In either case, Isaac is a fully grown man http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Near_sacrifice_of_Isaac

Modern interpretation of the sacrifice



In addition, if Isaac is 25 or 37, that makes Ishmael at least in his late thirties or even close to fifty at the time of the sacrifice. So, if Jewish or Muslim traditions are correct, both the Jewish and Islamic options have Abraham sacrificing older adults.

- Perhaps the Koran, which has an unknown child being taken for sacrifice may have it more correct and that the child killed was neither “Isaac” nor “Ishmael”, but another unnamed child.

For Abraham actually had quite a few other sons than just the two mentioned in the initial story. What is not often discussed or perhaps deliberately not mentioned in the modern interpretations of Abraham and God's promise to his "seed," is that there were later sons for Abraham.

- Gen: 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

As we read in the Bible, that despite his old age, when Sarah died, Abraham promptly remarried and had many additional sons.

- Gen 25: Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. 3 Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. 4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.

So in fact, according to the Bible, God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled after the sacrifice of Isaac. God gave Abraham many more sons (as he did for Job when he took away his children) and Abraham did in fact became the father of many nations (through Keturah) based on the Bible's own writings. The Bible goes on to say that Abraham left all his possessions to Isaac (Gen 25), which is the foundation for claiming that the blessing was passed on only through the line of Isaac. However, this again could be a later assertion, and is not specifically stated in the Bible.

As I said, this is only a brief review of the story, and is merely a cursory look at the tremendous amount of discussion about the "binding of Isaac."

- But clearly, just in this short review, there is enough to consider the possibility that the story of Isaac is a story of the contract between God (El) and Abraham (the foundation myth of the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews) solidified, by the standard means of the time, by sacrifice of a child (or in fact the first born child).

It is also possible that the story was later transferred and rewritten as a means to make the folk hero (Abraham) the basis for the rejection of the concepts of El and Ba'al and to give a biblical foundation for the stopping of child sacrifice.

This rewrite most likely took place not in the time of the First Jewish Commonwealth, but during the Babylonian exile or at the beginnings of the Second Jewish Commonwealth (or in the late 6th Century BC rather than in the 11th Century BC.) Therefore, the story of the sacrifice, as a sacrifice, was most likely around for thousands of years before the reform, and could not be wholly rejected, but needed to be retold to help to promulgate the concepts of the new Jewish religion.

However, even in the effort to re-write the story, conflicts arose on how best to interpret the issues involved. One especially significant issue involved the future concept of the Devil.

In later Midrashic elaborations of the role of Satan (or Mastema), he is portrayed as putting obstacles in the way of Abraham's attempts to sacrifice Isaac: 'Satan came and jogged Abraham's arm and the knife fell out of his hand. As he stretched out his hand to pick it up a Heavenly Voice cried out, "Lay not your hand upon the lad." But for that Isaac

would already have been slain' (Tanhuma, Vayera, 23).

- Satan is here portrayed as saving Isaac's life in his efforts to prevent Abraham from obeying God's command.

... In all these elaborations one thing is clear: that the responsibility for the sacrifice lies with God who commanded it and with Abraham who decided to obey the command.

Sacred Executioner {p. 81} <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

This review of Isaac, and also the review of this question of Phoenician influence on the Israelite culture, is not to say that during the time of the First Commonwealth (Judges through the fall of the Kingdom of Judah) there were not those who fought against human sacrifice. But it appears that through most of the history of the First Commonwealth, the act of "passing through the fire, was seen as justified and moral, by the masses of the Israelite people and most of the leadership (Kings and Priests).

Later, with defeat and the seeming acceptance that the act of sacrificing humans was the basis for God's demanding the defeats and exile, the stories changed and the concept of human sacrifice became, for the modern Jew (meaning the Jew of the Second Commonwealth – not meaning modern today) something to be abhorred. We can see then that the stories of the Bible had to change to meet the newly designed message of the Religion.

- To give a modern (meaning current) analogy, we see that current Southern "fundamentalist" Christians in the US often claim credit for the Bible, and "Christian motivation" as being the source for the ending of slavery, despite the fact that the same type of person (the fundamentalist of the early 1800's) use to state that slavery was justified by the Bible and it was God's will that inferior peoples be kept in bondage.
- The modern people of the South see slavery as immoral, while their earlier counterparts saw slavery as moral and just. The modern Southerners are trying to rid themselves of the "taint" of racism, which is now socially abhorrent, and are attempting to rewrite history to help rid them of that taint.
- The Jews (or Hebrews) use to see child sacrifice as moral and justified by God, and then when they came to see it as abhorrent, had to rewrite their history to try and eliminate their "taint."

However, in the words of Maccoby in the Sacred Executioner:

- There can be no doubt that the Akedah story reflects a period when human sacrifice was believed to be the divine prerogative. Even in its fully developed form, as we have it in the Bible, the story expresses no abhorrence of human sacrifice as such, but instead stresses the mercy of God in waiving His right to such sacrifice. The law of the redemption of the first-born reflects the same attitude: by right, every first-born son should be sacrificed to God, but He, in His mercy, has allowed a ceremony of redemption instead. Very far from this are the later passages of the Hebrew Bible that express horror at the very idea of human sacrifice as being indistinguishable from murder. {p. 84} *Sacred Executioner* <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

In this change of view on sacrifice, mainly consolidated during the Babylonian exile, we see

the future conflict between the “New Jew” and the followers of the “old time religion” that is so critical to the rest of this story.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection E - Question 3 - Did the Phoenicians introduce and spread the practice child sacrifice into large areas of the Mediterranean basin.

Again, this is a question that can only be answered using the spotty records that remain from the writings of the Ancients and Classical times. And, again, these records could be accurate or just propaganda. However, more recent discoveries in the islands of the Mediterranean show stronger evidence to support the concepts of the spread of Phoenician culture, and also that of human sacrifice.

As we have said, it's difficult to comprehend how long a period we are talking about in this survey. We know that some cities were established in the area of Phoenicia very early, possible as early as 8000 BC, and we also know that the area was part of the ancient trading route that stretched at least from Çatal Hüyük to Jericho and was in place by about 7500 BC. This culture developed and prospered for millennia, almost unchallenged. With the rise of Egypt, we see contact between these two cultures and over the course of some 4000 years Egypt sometimes dominated the area and at other times were just trading partners.

By about 3000 BC the concept of a distinct Phoenicia had developed, and by 2000 BC the area was “trading” within the whole Mediterranean area. Refer back to the section on the history of Phoenicia for more details on this and the cities they established. For approximately the next 1000 years at least they were relatively unchallenged in this domination, and for another 800 years they fought Greek and Roman efforts to take control of the land and the trade from these areas.

We can see the strength of Phoenician influence in that even during the rise of Rome, the language of the Phoenicians continued to be critical as a means of communications in the Roman Empire

- No language was more widely known and spoken throughout antiquity than Phœnician, with the exception of Greek and Latin. <http://www.bethelcog.org/lsrChap6.htm>

And we also know that the Phoenicians spread out, founded new cities and took with them their culture, and religious practices.

- We have clear records from several sources that Carthage, the most successful, but by far not the only colony of the Phoenicians, copied the culture of the mother land.

The parts of the Ancient and Classical texts that do remain include:

- A History of the Phoenicians, by Philo of Byblos written around A.D. 100, wherein he reports that child sacrifice was customary among the Phoenicians. In times of national danger, ‘The Phoenicians sacrificed their dearest children in a mysterious fashion.’ See <http://www.dhushara.com/book/orsin/decalog.htm>, the Carthaginians appear to do the same

- The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (1st century B.C.) reports that once (in the year 310 B.C.) a great disaster was threatening the city of Carthage ... Thereupon the Carthaginians sacrificed two hundred children from the best families. A child was laid in the arms of a bronze statue of Cronos and would then roll off into a burning oven (Library XX, xiv).

In addition, [Plutarch](#) (ca. 46–120 AD) [Tertullian](#) and [Orosius](#), also talk of the practice in their writings.

- Diodorus also relates relatives were forbidden to weep and that when [Agathocles](#) defeated Carthage, the Carthaginian nobles believed they had displeased the gods by substituting low-born children for their own children. They attempted to make amends by sacrificing 200 children at once, children of the best families, and in their enthusiasm actually sacrificed 300 children. [Plutarch](#) wrote in *De Superstitiones* 171:

Paul G. Mosca in his thesis translates Cleitarchus' paraphrase of a scholia to [Plato's Republic](#) describing the process in Carthage as:

- There stands in their midst a bronze statue of Kronos, its hands extended over a bronze brazier, the flames of which engulf the child. When the flames fall upon the body, the limbs contract and the open mouth seems almost to be laughing until the contracted body slips quietly into the brazier. Thus it is that the 'grin' is known as 'sardonic laughter,' since they die laughing. <http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/cleitarchus/cleitarchus.htm>

Through the early Phoenician efforts, and through the later Carthaginian control of the Western Mediterranean, the practice appears to have been conducted in most of the areas of what are now North Africa, Spain and Southern France. Clear evidence (although disputed by some) shows the practice in the major islands of the empire, including Corsica and Sardinia (where there have been fewer conquests over history and therefore better "ruins.")

- Recently, doubts have been voiced about such reports of child sacrifice among the Phoenicians. Sabatino Moscati stresses that neither in cosmopolitan Carthage nor in the Phoenician city-states were the gods' favors courted by the systematic burning of children. The few Carthaginian texts which have survived make absolutely no mention of child sacrifice, though Carthaginian votive steles (several in Egyptian style) display a priest carrying a living-child, apparently to sacrifice. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Carthage

This Phoenician, at least, contact, if not dominance in the West lasted at least 1800 years (from 2000 BC or so to 200 BC). Again, it would seem logical and rational to look for the traces of their rituals in current religious practices of the area. Again, we see them.

In part we see these traces in the acceptance of the core concept of Christianity (God sacrificing his son for the good of the society) by the peoples of North Africa and Spain. The sacrificing of sons was common practice among the inhabitants and evolved from long contact with the Phoenicians and their colonies.

As discussed below, our resources on Carthage are very limited and often jaded by the writers (mostly enemies of Carthage). However, as noted, we do have the Greek writer Diodorus's story of the class issue in the sacrifice (which apparently required wealthy not poor

children) Diodorus Siculus suggests an origin for the ritual:

- The ancient myth that Cronos did away with his own children appears to have been kept in mind among the Carthaginians through this observance.

It is possible that the influence of the Phoenicians was even greater and of a longer duration than has been acknowledged. There is some theory that the Celts (who were “notorious” for human sacrifice) and who dominated most of Europe until the arrival of the Germanic tribes and Romans, are descendants of Phoenicians peoples themselves.

<http://phoenicia.org/celts.html>

There are debates on the identity and origin of the Celtic peoples. Where did they come from and when did they arrive in Europe? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celts#Ancient_uses

The time frame appears to fit well within the period of Phoenician domination. The first written notice of the Celts was about 600 BC, by Greek writers, but by that time they were well established though much of Western Europe, including what is now Spain (which was mostly, by that time, controlled by Carthage). In addition, there are questions of if they were really of a single origin or developed separately, only later to form a “unified culture.” One of these theories is that the Celtic peoples were in fact descendants of early Phoenicians.

- While active in Spain, these Phoenician/Carthaginian descendants are called ‘Celtiberians’ by archaeologists. Later, some sailed away from Spain and colonized the British Isles, where they are simply called ‘**Celts**’ by archaeologists.
<http://www.mystae.com/restricted/streams/thera/phoenicians.html>

It is also possible that the Phoenicians were just a major cultural influence on the Celts, and helped to establish their religious rituals, including human sacrifice. (The Druid religion is based on the rites of the Phoenicians.)

- The Druids taught the existence of one god, to whom they gave a name “Be’ al,” which Celtic antiquaries tell us means “the life of everything,” or “the source of all beings,” and which seems to have affinity with the Phœnician Ba’al. What renders this affinity more striking is that the Druids as well as the Phœnicians identified this, their supreme deity, with the *Sun*. <http://www.bartleby.com/181/411.html>

In addition, from the writings that remain, the Celts were allies of the Carthaginians, throughout all the wars with the Greeks and the three Punic wars, and were the majority in the armies and navies of Carthage through the fight against Rome; The overwhelming number of Hannibal’s army were Celts, and he continued to gain new recruits from the Celts throughout his seventeen year campaign in Italy (while getting almost no direct support from Carthage itself). As we see in many settings to come, and previous to these wars, the influence of Carthage, the major “civilized force” and the chief employer in war, upon these peoples had to be great.

The Celts were not the only ones to copy the religious approach of the Phoenicians; others copied them when needed. For example Rome, in 215 BC, faced with crushing defeats at the hands of the Carthaginian Hannibal, actually, decided to “do as the Romans” or in this case “as the Carthaginians did.” The Roman Senate authorized the sacrificing of four children of noble families to please the Gods, so that the tide of the war would be turned. (Which, one could argue, worked, since after the sacrificing the children, Rome survived and eventually

destroyed Carthage (correlation is not causation?)

Since the Punic peoples, among all of the peoples of the Ancient world, were identified with the practice of sacrificing of children not only in time of crisis, but also for the purposes of contracts, as part of their standard religious rites, it is not surprising that we see evidence that these practices were spread to other peoples. If we can accept the fact that the Phoenicians were a major force in the world for centuries, it should not be surprising that we see these practices passed on to the Celts, and perhaps retained in the folk culture of these regions through such actions as the Auto de Fe and witch burnings (a focus in the second of these books).

How far did the Phoenicians spread their culture? Most of this knowledge is lost to history. However, it appears, as we have seen that the Phoenicians circumnavigated Africa, and traded with Britain. This much we can more or less prove.

- However one very curious question remains, that involves Pre Columbian contact, Were the cultures of the Americas influenced by other cultures prior to the arrival of Columbus? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Columbian_trans-oceanic_contact.

This has been one of my favorite areas of investigations for decades, and it its strange that there is a possible overlap between two of my historical interests.

Much of the impetus for the “pre Columbian theories” were racist based; Westerners could not accept that the “savages” of the “new world” could develop such sophisticated cultures as the Incas, Mayas, and Aztecs without external influence. Therefore, the knowledge to create such cities and temples had to come from ... you name it (Rome, Egypt, Space Aliens, Irish monks, just to name a few options offered by various persons). Little, if any, support for most of these theories exist, (but they do sell books) and for the most part, modern research can show the evolution of the Mesoamericans and the independent development of culture.

- However, there are some intriguing elements of the Western and Mesoamerican cultures where great similarities in the structure of the religions exist. In addition, the story of the great “bringer of culture” who (like Jesus) promised to return is another interesting common element. The idea of “first contact” has raised endless questions for Europeans, and later other moderns. Much of the debate ranges around the God Quetzalcoatl, and the unassociated practice of human sacrifice.

Quetzalcoatl was a god that provided the guide for the “right way of living” and provided great knowledge concerning crops and culture. And, like so many of these folk legends, did not die, but went away with a promise of return. Although it’s not clear to what extent the Aztecs really believed Cortez and the Spanish to be the returning God, it appears that the question prevented a quick and overwhelming response from the Aztecs that would have easily crushed the small and ill equipped forces of the raid.

- By the time the Spanish showed themselves to be greedy gold seeking freebooters, the Aztec leadership was nearly all dead from disease and the remaining people were unable to mount an effective resistance.

What little records we do have show that the Spanish were mostly in awe of the Aztec cities and markets. At the time, there were no cities in Christian Europe that were near the size of the Aztec capital. Nor was there anywhere near the variety or quantity of food stuffs in

European food markets as they saw in every city to which they traveled. Unlike what we have come to think (Superior Europeans, savage Mesoamericans) Cortez and his soldiers, saw Aztec culture as “superior” in many ways. But they saw the Aztec greatness as something coming not from God, but the Devil, and therefore they were justified in destroying it.

The Spanish were greatly struck, and often intimidated by the similarities between the religious structures (priest class) and concepts between themselves and Aztecs. In addition the rituals were similar, except it appeared to the Spanish that the eating of the lord’s body and drinking of his blood were all too literal with the Aztecs; showing to the Spanish clear evidence of the presence of the Devil in this great culture.

- For most people today and for the European Christians who first met the Aztecs, [human sacrifice](#) was the most striking feature of Aztec civilization. While human sacrifice was practiced throughout Mesoamerica, the Aztecs, if their own accounts are to be believed, brought this practice to an unprecedented level. For example, for the re-consecration of [Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan](#) in 1487, the Aztecs reported that they sacrificed 84,400 prisoners over the course of four days, reportedly by [Ahuitzotl](#), the Great Speaker himself. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztecs#Human_sacrifice

Although it appears that human sacrifice was not required for the God Quetzalcoatl, the act was required of the chief god, by burning people, and to the storm god (one of the manifestations of Ba’al) by the sacrificing of children.

Huehuetēotl

To appease [Huehuetēotl](#), the fire god and a senior deity, the Aztecs had a ceremony where they prepared a large feast at the end of which they would burn captives alive. Huehuetēotl was believed to have a preference for the bodies of newlywed couples. The sacrifice was considered a double offering to the deity. Just before the victims died in the flames they were removed from the fires to have their hearts extracted.

Tláloc

[Tláloc](#) was the god of rain. The Aztecs believed that if sacrifices weren’t supplied for Tláloc, rain wouldn’t come and their crops wouldn’t flourish. Tláloc required the tears of the young as part of the sacrifice. The priests made the children cry during their way to immolation: a good omen that Tláloc would wet the earth in the raining season.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_sacrifice_in_Aztec_culture

- For full detail on the Aztec rite of human sacrifices and the some 20 types involved please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_sacrifice_in_pre-Columbian_cultures

To be clear, this effort is not saying that the origin of human sacrifice in the Americas is based in Phoenician contact. However, there is a case that could be made for the strong possibility that such contacts were made and that the culture was inserted into Mesoamerican development. And, just like the insertion of a new fish or plant with no predators to control its spread into an eco-system, when human sacrifice was introduced to the developing cultures in the Americas, it was never checked, and grew in numbers and intensity.

However, looking at the concepts of Joseph Campbell and many others, there are also

commonly shared concepts that all fall into the realm of human experience and thought. The development of human sacrifice among the Phoenicians and later among the Mesoamericans could just be coincidence within expected parameters of human development. (Correlation is not causation).

However, we still do have that “nasty” concept of Quetzalcoatl, of the great leader who appears, promotes justice, and goes away with a promise of return (which is also a common theme in human development; see the Yellow Emperor, as one example http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_Emperor) or Jesus). We do know that the early development of child sacrifice in the Americas, and the time period of Phoenician dominance are contemporaneous events. Perhaps as more research and exploration comes about, the question of “contact” can be better answered. However, for now, it does appear that, if such contact existed with what would become the Americas, the great extent of voyages made outside of the “pillars of Heracles” by the Phoenician/Punic peoples appear to make them the most likely candidate for that contact. The voyages of the Phoenician/Punic peoples are well confirmed by historic facts, in very ancient times; as opposed to the supposed trips of an Irish priest or Greek freebooters) It might also explain the discovery of very ancient Phoenician coins up and down the East coast of what is now the US.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection F - Question 4 Was the Phoenicians religion maintained, despite all the defeats?

Previously we outlined the fall of Phoenicia and Carthage to the forces of Greece and Rome, and the eventual elimination of the Punic people as a political power in the world. In addition, we have talked about the rise of the Second Jewish commonwealth and its effort to impose Judaism on the region through force. With all this defeat, it would appear that the religion, what we have called “Ba’alism,” would have been crushed by the combination of forces. And by reading traditional and Church dominated history, that would appear to be the case.

However, this is not true, and a more complete telling of the continuing resurrection of this religion will be seen from our examination of its impact on the internal crisis of the Roman Empire, brought on with the death of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. However, to try to maintain the flow of this work so far, we can say that despite the defeats, and despite the efforts of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, there were peoples in the area that tried to maintain the old religion. We can safely say so. The most glaring example is the Emperor Elagabalus. Sometimes called Heliogabalus, Elagabalus and his preceding family members, the Emperors, Lucius Septimius Severus and Caracalla were the first to push a “One God/One Emperor” approach to justifying the increasing authoritarian rule of the emperors over a thirty year period. The choice of Elagabalus for the one true god was the sun god of Syria, and he tried to impose a single religion dedicated to this god on the whole of the Empire. As we shall see this sun god, was a revival of the ancient religion of Canaan. Heliogabalus (or Lord that is the Sun – Balus being a Greek form or Ba’al) was in fact a rebirth of Ba’alism:

- Elagabalus’s family held hereditary rights to the priesthood of the sun god [El-Gabal](#), of whom Elagabalus was the [high priest](#) at Emesa (modern [Homs](#)) in [Syria](#).
- The name El-Gabal originally referred to the patron deity of the emperor’s birthplace, Emesa. [El](#) refers to the chief [Semitic](#) deity, while [Gabal](#), meaning mountain ... in is his Emesene manifestation. The god was later imported and assimilated with the Roman sun god, who was known as [Sol Indiges](#) in [republican](#) times, and later [Sol Invictus](#) during the [2nd](#) and [3rd](#) centuries. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus>

The Emperor accomplished more than his more successful relative emperors, by moving forward their desires to create a one-god religion. He had a huge temple to El created in Rome and then he had:

- The most sacred relics from the Roman religion transferred from their respective shrines to the Elagabalium, including the [Great Mother](#), the fire of [Vesta](#), the [Shields](#) of the [Salii](#) and the [Palladium](#), so that no other God except El-Gabal would be worshipped. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El-Gabal>

We will return to the Emperor later, and discuss more of his approaches to religion (including a “merging” of Jewish and Ba’alist approaches to worship). However, suffice it to say at this point, for this section, that despite the years of defeats and repression, the religion of the area

of Phoenicia remained to some degree, and was greatly enhanced by having one their high priests become the emperor of all of Rome.

This non-fading away of the Ba'alistic religion should not come as much of a surprise to any modern reader who is familiar simply with the Jewish religion which has been repressed in all forms and manners since the great revolts against Rome, and still has survived. Nor are the Jews alone in history when it comes to religious repressions, and survivals

- We have great examples of the many Native Americans in North America who maintain traditional beliefs despite endless efforts to change them to “good Christians,”
- Buddhism has remained a viable religion despite multiple efforts to repress the concepts (especially in China)
- Many African peoples maintained traditional belief systems despite the efforts of European nations to “save their souls” during the period of colonialism. And lastly
- We find many variations of Christianity that have maintained themselves in relative isolation, such as the Coptic of Egypt, and in the face of extensive repression by the “Orthodox” churches of the time (such as the Mennonites).

Just the fact that there are Roman Catholics in England, after some 500 years of discrimination is example enough that religions do not seem to disappear, even in the face of great repression: They resist and they may “morph” but they do not tend to disappear.

Part III – Human Sacrifice –

Section II – Five Critical Questions

Subsection G Question 5 – Was Ba'alism a Great Rival of Christianity?

As just noted, the Roman emperors' effort to impose a "one emperor, on god" structure on the former republic did not begin with Constantine. In fact, the effort had clearly been underway for nearly one hundred and fifty years prior to Constantine's issue of tolerance. The effort actually began during the reign of the emperor [Septimius Severus](#) (193-211). Under this emperor:

- There was no escaping eastern religion. Septimius came into contact with eastern philosophers in Emesa and studied the writings and sermons of Sol Invictus Elagabal From now on, the imperial family propagated the cult of Sol Invictus. More and more Syrians came to Rome and occupied high offices. [Caracalla](#) followed his father's lead by expressing his wish for a single religious faith and cult, universally accepted. In the end, this plan was executed by Heliogabalus. <http://www.livius.org/he-hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion2.html#Religious2>

Sol Invictus is a manifestation of the Ba'al traditions. The actual initial god that Elagabalus proclaimed as the chief god of Rome, replacing Jupiter was EL or [Baal](#) ("lord") of [Emesa](#) (in ancient [Syria](#)), or *El-Gabal*, Latinized as Elagabalus. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El-Gabal>

While the term Sol Invictus came to represent a series of sun gods that were the choices of the emperors for the "One God" under the one Emperor, One God sequence, the first tried by the ruling family was clearly Syrian Sun God, Ba'al. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus).

So, despite the centuries of defeats and domination by Greek, Roman and Jewish rulers, the religion of Ba'al was the first choice of the Emperor for the one true unified religion. It took almost 175 additional years for Christianity to obtain that status, and during that time there were constant challenges from one form of Sol Invictus or another, all having their basis in Ba'alism.

During this time frame, we will see several emperors adopt a "single religion" policy, but until Constantine, that religion was not Christianity, but Sol Invictus in several different forms. But in each manifestation, the influence of Ba'alist concepts were present.

And, at least initially, we can see that this religion offered by the Severian Emperors was more a mixture of Ba'al and Judaism, or as we have been calling it the religion of the remnant populations of the people of Israel and Judea that were not taken into exile (or the very poor not deemed worthy of being taken into exile). For example, as part of his worship of the Sun, Elagabalus practiced rites traditionally connected to Judaism. As noted in <http://www.livius.org/he-hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion.html#Religious1>

- Several things were required of the high priest of Sol Invictus Elagabal, because Dio speaks of the emperor's circumcision and his abstinence from pork

The writings found through modern archeology have shown us much about the old beliefs of the Ba'al religion. It appears that the practices of circumcision and possibly abstaining from eating pork were adopted by the Jews from the Phoenicians, not the other way around. After all, the Cronus story claims he initiated circumcision.

But other aspects of his religion practices were traditional Ba'alism, and continued to practice what the Jews had worked hard to purge.

- Heliogabalus (Greek version of the name Elagabalus) is also accused of child sacrifice. This charge has been noted in Cassius Dio and in the *Historia Augusta*. It is a lot more serious than the other charges. The author of the *Historia Augusta* says that the emperor chose beautiful, noble, young boys for these sacrifices, whose parents were still alive ... The sacrifices were carried out by magicians who studied the entrails afterwards. <http://www.livius.org/he-hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion.html>

The reason for this ability of merging of Ba'al and Judaism is clearly based on the close proximity of the two cultures (if in fact they were not originally one culture). However, some of these connections to Judaism did not go over well with the Roman elite.

- Undoubtedly, one of the Emperor's chief mistakes was his attempt to amalgamate the kindred worship of Jerusalem, in its various forms, with that of the Roman deities, and even though his circumcision almost certainly belongs to the period when he became High Priest of Elagabaal (the period when he attained to puberty), the connection of this ceremony with the kindred Jewish observance was sufficient, in the Roman mind, to brand Antonine (the emperor's Latin name) as a Hebrew innovator.. <http://members.aol.com/heliogabby/amazing/aeh5.htm>

Apparently, to the Romans, sacrificing children was less detestable than circumcision, and not eating pork.

However, we can see in this brief review that by the beginning of the third century AD it was Jewish/Baal religion that had almost become the religion of the Roman world. If these emperors had been successful in their goal of establishing "one god one emperor" by using Ba'al, it clearly could have prevented the rise of the upstart Christian sect.

- And the continued support of Emperors for the concept of Sol Invictus, in its several forms, made this Ba'alistic religion a clear rival of Christianity, and one that needed to be confronted in the Christians' efforts to become the new religion of the land.

However, before we continue with the story of how the Christians confronted the Ba'alistic concepts, we need to go back again and pick up some more information. Part of this information is the reason why Rome could be "open" to ancient religion of the Phoenicians in the first place. How did they come in contact with this religion? To understand the answer to this question we need to understand more about the time of Rome, and the time of the Greeks and Persians just before Rome.

We need to understand that with the new concept of "empire", came the first major "clash of civilizations;" first between Persia, and the Ancients, then between Persia and the Greeks, and their successors, the Romans. The epic confrontation between Rome and the Punic people of Carthage was hardly the first "clash of civilizations (and as the empires grew, there

were other clashes, with such cultures as India and to a lesser degree in this time frame, China). With the rising and falling of powers, we also need to look at the contemporaneous conflict between the Jewish religion and almost all the other players. In addition, we need to remember that with this new concept of Empire, with the each culture clash that developed conflict, there was also a religious element. With each religious conflict we had peoples in the contested area reacting in one of the four ways we have discussed (acceptance, rejection, merging, and morphing).

Therefore, before we can discuss how the Christians responded to the Ba'alist challenge, and analyze the morphing process between Baal and Christianity, that I claim in this book, we need to go back again to see how the rise of Empire created these cross cultural conflicts and a great crisis in Western world of the time.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section I – Impact Of The Coming Of The Persian - New Religious Concepts

With the fall of the cities of Phoenicia, first to the Persians and then to Greeks, an era seemed to end. The Persians' religion was different from other conquerors, and the Greeks brought the Hellenization of the "Near East" (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenization>). We in the West mostly know of the Greek efforts. This process of the impact of the Greeks, what we call Hellenization, is a long and complex history, which begins in the area of Phoenicia with the initial efforts of Alexander to create a "merged" society. His efforts mostly failed upon his death. Alexander's subsequent "Hellene chauvinist" successors were less tolerant of "Eastern ways," and the eventual blending of the ideas took longer than Alexander had projected, as the "successor states" of Alexander (or the Diadochi, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diadochoi>) settled into the politics of competing with each other for the lands conquered by the Great One; and within the lands they did control, of being forced to adopt the ways of their "indigenous" populations.

While Hellenization took place, it clearly was not a one way street, especially in the areas of religion. The issues of cultural merging were complicated even more with the coming of Rome into the region of Phoenicia, as well as the whole area, some 275 years after Alexander.

While the politics of the period are interesting (to some) the concern of this work is on the impact of Hellenization on religious development, and how this blending of the cultures of "East and West" began to merge, as new peoples and ideas (the Greeks and their concepts of the world) began to flood into the areas so long dominated by other concepts.

However, the Greek world views, different than the Ancients, created such a "clash of cultures" to the Phoenicians (and to almost all of the other peoples under their empire) that the world today is still sorting out the issues raised by the new power.

We in the West know far more of the impact of the Greeks. However, in many ways the impact of the Persians, and their concepts of the divine and of rule, may have been, in the long term, even stronger than the Hellenes. It can be argued that in the long haul, until the rise of modern European culture, the Persian world view was more successful than the "Greek" world view.

We in the West have a better understanding or awareness of the concept of Hellenization than we do of the Persian world view. Of course, what most of us in the West do not know is that, prior to the arrival of the Greeks, there was an equal if not more important, "flood" into this area as a result of the Persian rule, with great impact on the religious thinking of these Phoenician, as well as Jewish, peoples.

The main new concept presented by the Persians was that of "dualism" (for details on Persian Dualism see <http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/cosmology/dualism.htm>) as manifested in the dominant Persian religion, **Zoroastrianism**. The proposed founder of the religion (Zoroaster) saw:

The foundation of human existence is the cosmic struggle between Aša (**Pahlavi** *Ahlāyih*), "The Truth," and *Druj* (**Pahlavi** *Druz*), "The Lie." This may also be

conceptualized as a battle between Darkness and Light, a structure parallel to the struggle between *good* and *evil* in Western [paradigm](#). The two opposing forces in this battle are [Ahura Mazdā \(God\)](#) and [Ahriman \(The Devil\)](#). In the *yasnas*, Zoroaster refers to these as “the Better and the Bad.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroaster>

In addition, the Persians followed the core beliefs associated with Zoroastrianism which included:

1. There is one universal and transcendental God, [Ahura Mazda](#), the one uncreated Creator to whom all worship is ultimately directed.
2. Ahura Mazda’s creation - evident as *asha*, truth and order - is the [antithesis](#) of chaos, evident as *dorough*, falsehood and disorder. The resulting conflict involves the entire universe, including humanity, which has an active role to play in the conflict.
3. Active participation in life through good thoughts, good words and good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep the chaos at bay. This *active* participation is a central element in Zoroaster’s concept of [free will](#), and Zoroastrianism rejects all forms of [monasticism](#).
4. Ahura Mazda will ultimately prevail, at which point the universe will undergo a cosmic renovation and time will end (*cf.* [Zoroastrian eschatology](#)). In the final renovation, all of creation - even the souls of the dead that were initially banished to “darkness” - will be (re)united in God.
5. In Zoroastrian tradition, the malevolent is represented by [Angra Mainyu](#), the “Destructive Principle”, while the benevolent is represented through Ahura Mazda’s [Spenta Mainyu](#), the instrument or “Bounteous Principle” of the act of creation. It is through Spenta Mainyu that Ahura Mazda is immanent in humankind, and through which the Creator interacts with the world. According to Zoroastrian cosmology, in articulating the [Ahuna Vairya](#) formula, Ahura Mazda made his ultimate triumph evident to Angra Mainyu.
6. As expressions and aspects of Creation, Ahura Mazda emanated six “sparks”, the [Amesha Spentas](#), “Bounteous Immortals” that are each the hypostasis and representative of one aspect of that Creation. These Amesha Spenta are in turn assisted by a league of lesser principles, the [Yazatas](#), each “Worthy of Worship” and each again a hypostasis of a moral or physical aspect of Creation.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism>

Within these precepts we see much of the modern religious thought of the Modern Western World. It seems that the origins of these thoughts may be Persian, if not also dating back to India or Egypt for some of the key ideas. However, we see from the reshaping of Judasims during and after the exile, that many Persian ideas are infused into the Jewish thinking, and perhaps are truly the origins for the Jewish perspective.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section II A Far Too Quick Review Of The Development Of Religion

Subsection Part A - But Back To The Statement --- In The Beginning.

The Western concept of creation is dominated by the Christian efforts to make the Bible “absolute truth.” So the creation story, especially for the fundamentalist Christians, takes place as stated; the story in the Bible is not as allegory but “fact”. Using these “facts” as stated in the Bible, Bishop Ussher (1581-1656), based on his extensive study of the “Old Testament” was able to place creation to an exact day and time of September 23, 4004 BC and the great flood some 1650 years later (May 2348 BC). For many, if not most of those in the West, for more than two centuries this time frame was more or less accepted as “absolute”, and still is part of the core beliefs of “creationists.”

<http://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/ussher.htm>

But, we now know, through the breakthroughs in the study of the ancient Middle East made during the last 100 years or so is that that:

The Sumerian kings list goes back some 241,200 years before the flood

<http://www.answersingenesis.org/tj/v12/i3/sumerian.asp>

- We have also learned by fair exchange of cultures that the Chinese place creation about 40,000 years ago <http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art29121.asp>
- And the religions of the Hindus and Buddhist place the beginnings billions of years ago (which may actually be most accurate of all religions’ projections.. According to [Dick Teresi](#) author of [The God Particle](#).)
 - The 8.64 billion years that mark a full day-and-night cycle in Brahma’s life is about half the modern estimate for the age of the universe. The ancient Hindus believed that each Brahma day and each Brahma night lasted a kalpa, 4.32 billion years, with 72,000 kalpas equaling a Brahma century, 311,040 billion years in all. http://www.hinduwisdom.info/Hindu_Cosmology.htm

And of course, science now gives us a very different answer than the Bible, and one that again has changed greatly, especially over the last 100 year or so, as both intellectual freedom and modern technology has allowed us to gain a greater understanding of both the human story and the story of the Universe. Our understanding of the Big Bang and the creation of the universe and the development of humans is too great to cover in detail here. However, it appears that for humans at least we can say that some form of sapiens existed more then 5 million years ago, and the rise of homo sapiens comes about some 100,000 years ago. “The Great Leap Forward” in human consciousness, took place about 50,000 years ago, where the modern use of language (and perhaps religion) develop, as well as art (cave paintings etc.)

However, the “Great Leap” really does not explain religion, and how it came about. Religions, themselves, have given us so many options for the need for religion, mostly based in a concept of “divine truth”. However, again, in the modern age a more scientific approach (and at various times in human history where “free thought was allowed”) about what religion really

is has been an on-going debate. The arguments put forth ranged and still range from the concept that religion is “complete fantasy” to complete “truth.”

- (In the modern times, the actual fastest growing group concerning religion is “atheism/agnostics” or non-believers/not knowing), jumping from almost nothing, to some 16% of the world, in the last 100 or so years ago. And is now ranked third in “adherents behind Christians and Muslims
http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html

As with so many of the issues raised in this book, a complete discussion of these points of religion or non-religion can not be had, and yet needs to be understood. For a quick review of the options concerning what religion is please see the article on *Development of Religion* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_religion Here the concepts of religion are grouped into three main areas:

Models which see religions as social constructions;

Models which see religions as progressing toward higher, objective truth;

Models which see a particular religion as absolutely true;

In addition, in this site, [Anthony F.C. Wallace](#) proposes four categories of religion, each subsequent category subsuming the previous. These are, however, synthetic categories and do not necessarily encompass all religions.

1. **Individualistic**: most basic; simplest. Example: vision quest.
2. **Shamanistic**: part-time religious practitioner, uses religion to heal, to divine, usually on the behalf of a client. The Tillamook have four categories of shaman. Examples of shamans: spiritualists, faith healers, palm readers. One who has acquired religious authority through one’s own means.
3. **Communal**: elaborate set of beliefs and practices; group of people arranged in clans by lineage, age group, or some religious societies; people take on roles based on knowledge.
4. **Ecclesiastical**: Most complex. Incorporates elements of the previous three.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology_of_religion
 - We also know, just from the expansion of communications and contacts between peoples that there are really three great religious traditions in the world, the first and most ancient is the **Dharmic religions**, which are a family of religions that have originated from the [Indian subcontinent](#). They encompass the [Vedic religion](#) (now [Hinduism](#)), [Buddhism](#), [Jainism](#), and [Sikhism](#).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmic_Religions
 - The other two are the [Abrahamic religions](#) (all the forms of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and others) and the [Taoic religions](#) of Asia.

I personally also see four broad major reasons for the initial development of religion. In addition, as cultures developed and “rulers” arose, there seem to be an additional four reasons for civilizations to increase the use of religion. All of these issues were basic points

that needed to be addressed for both “non” civilized people and then as urban life developed. And I put these eight points in rather simple language that may be close to the actual thoughts of people 40,000 or so years ago.

- 1) What is that mess in the sky and does it affect me? ... (movement of Sun, Moon, planets etc.)
- 2) Can I please eat? (First, can I kill this animal? Later, why does it (or does not) rain? Or, how come the fields dry up and then grow back again? ... (with the rise of agriculture, a key issue is weather)
- 3) (And perhaps the most important to people then, and maybe now, “love”) ... What the heck happens to those who I love when they die? (with, in the early days of humans, death of children, parents, mates and other loved ones being frequent and often, early), and lastly,
- 4) What can a poor boy do after a long week of working? ... Can you provide me with some entertainment? (Including a reason to have sex with someone other than my mate) Religion was the mass entertainment for all ages.

The four key manifest needs of religion that were added with the rise of “cultures” and urban life, with its new power structures or what became known as “civilization” included issues faced by the new ruling class. These included:

- How can the king make his commands and laws stick – (God wills it – Mandate of Heaven, etc)
- How can the king get people to build things he wants and also the things that are needed for the safety and economic needs of the community, such as buildings, city walls, dikes, etc (idle hands are the tools to devil – and the source of revolts)
- How can the king get people to fight for him ... and explain why opponents may sometimes win battles (again, God wills it – Mandate of Heaven, etc)
- How can the king keep his people from just up and moving and starting another kingdom - how can the king enable his people to feel a sense of unity (the rest of the world are barbarians, or pagans, and we are the Chosen people, etc)

Yes, the issue of Creation was also a key point, and often linked to the first point I raised (the movement of the stars, etc) but actually, in the study of myths, the creation issues are relatively minor aspects of peoples’ concern and are actually dealt with rather quickly. These other key issues presented here were the ones that soon became dominant. We can see that in most of the cultures of the Near East, and among the Greeks, the origin creation god (or gods) are soon replaced by the next generation of gods (or even several next generations of gods) that had little to do with the creation, but were more focused on the movement of stars, weather and death.

It also appears that most cultures saw the “beginning” as a time of one god, or possible two gods, but not really the time of many gods. The almost sole concern of this god (or gods) was the creation, and then, providing the world with the next generation of gods. While the original god may retain a post in the “Kingdom of Heaven” as the “father” or “mother god,” the

key focus of the religion was on the adventures and deaths (and rising) of the next generation of gods. It was this second (or maybe third) generation that provided the answers to the key points of movement of the stars, weather, death, etc.

Also, as society grew, the stories (myths) increased (not replaced) to include issues of “rule” “social obligations” “war” and “nationalism.” These myths may have remained in the second generation of gods, or progressed to the third. So the basic issues of the rain coming, or the river rising, or the dikes being repaired remained and became the dominant themes of the myths. But new complexities came about to answer the issue of why some people ruled and others slaved.

- This concept can be seen in the Greek and Roman god process ... (I will use the Greek god names here) In looking at the Greek story line you first have Chaos, or the time before creation, the Gaia the mother goddess, or “earth” who begets Uranus, or sky, and then married him to create the Titans, who overthrew Uranus, who were then overthrown by the “gods.” see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uranus_%28mythology%29

These concepts were very sophisticated compared to the origins of religion in general. Yet, once again, we actually know little about these origins. We guess the best we can based on folk cultures and also on the few ancient grave sites we discover now and then dating back some 30,000 years. Many have offered theories (other than the simple one that the stories of creation and the development of religion are actually “divine truth”).

One such theory is that of Karl W. Luckert who traces religious development in four stages <http://www.historyofreligions.com/intrel.htm>

- **Gathering, Scavenging, Hunting**—The span of time in humanoid evolution identified here with the activities of gathering, scavenging, and hunting may be estimated in excess of 3 million years ... Subsistence in this culture depends on the ability to forage and on the ability and courage to kill animals. Gatherers, scavengers, and hunters increasingly interfered at the end of their victims’ life cycles; they exploited natural deaths, learnt to inflict death themselves, and assume full control over their victims’ remains by consuming them. ... Hunter gods therefore were mostly greater-than-humanoid hunters who, accordingly, appeared mostly in the form of predators. Some hunters paid share offerings to gods from the carcasses of the victims they killed. To alleviate guilt they atoned for their trespasses. For their sins of killing, primitive hunters developed and performed religious retreat rituals—establishing a better relationship with victims and divine sponsors ceremonially.
- **Domestication**—Domesticators claimed ownership of seeds, plants, and livestock, and they paid their gods with sacrifices in kind—often whole specimens of animals and sheaves. The cultures of domesticators are marked by the activity of taking control over entire life cycles of plants and animals, from fertilization to consumption. They no longer just interfered at the moment of their victim’s death. Domesticators also claimed ownership of their dwellings and land, while newly discovered creator gods vouched and bestowed titles pertaining to these properties.
- **Grand Domestication**—The grand domestication phase is important for understanding the larger panorama of human evolution and history. Grand domestication began wherever ambitious domesticators, very often men of a herder

tradition, have pushed beyond the limit of merely controlling the life cycles of plants and animals. They proceeded to take control also of human groups as herds—together with the gods as protectors of those herds. Their most conspicuous methods for overdomesticating humankind were militarism, slavery, castration, and human sacrifice. Methods for domesticating the gods of subjected peoples included the building of stately “barns” or temples, setting up their gods in form of statues, feeding them on altars, and organizing the life of subject people by means of sacred calendars and festivals, thereby fixing the visiting and feeding hours for the safely sequestered gods.

- Whereas warrior, headhunter, and cannibal societies already may be classified as primitive forms of grand domestication, the practice of human sacrifice, in any form, represents a decadent hunters’ elaboration on the advanced religious logic of domesticators. By sacrificing a representative specimen from a human “herd,” grand domesticators paid for owning the remainder of that herd. They purchased humankind, herd animals, from their original divine owners. Human sacrifice legitimized the grand domesticators’ claim for absolute power over the lives and deaths of their subjects. It established their divine title of ownership by legitimate and religiously sanctioned purchase.
- **Universal Salvation Religions**—These are movements on behalf of ordinary people, which attempted to liberate them from the clasp of grand domestication systems that had become unbearable. Universal salvation religions are popular patterns of religious retreat behavior that attempt to reclaim universal dignity for all people, regardless of imperial boundaries, wealth, or inherited privileges. Theologically they would deny, or would claim as their own to counter, the privileged relationship of grand domesticators to their divine sources of authority and justification. Universal salvation religions have spread beyond imperial boundaries and become international movements.

This theory fits well in to the concepts of this book. This is, of course, a general, all too quick review of the development of religion. However, we need to remember that the shift to the “domestication period probably developed some 15,000 years ago and that the major great cultures first came into existence some 7,000 years ago. We really don’t know for sure and there continues to be great arguments about where and when “cities” first came into existence. (The best guess seems to be in the Middle East some 10,000 years ago or more.)



Dig at Catal Huyuk ... (south central Turkey) estimated at some 10,000 years old and perhaps the largest “city” of its time So far there has been found not temples, or palaces ... and no sign of worship other than ancestral and mother goddess. Personal photo

- What is clear though is that for the vast majority of modern human existence, there were no major urban centers, and little that would be called “culture.”

However, there appeared to be “religion” of some kind from the advent of humans especially since that “Great Leap Forward.” The stage of religious development for that time was mainly Luckert’s “hunter gatherer” stage

There also continues to be major disagreement on how or when religion went through its various metamorphoses to reach the “domestication stage” and then to begin to develop into the great modern religions. It appears that humans somewhere about 35,000 years ago started burying people and developed the concepts of animism, shamanism, and ancestor worship developed (still included in Luckert’s first stage). The first more “global’ religions developed somewhere around 17,000 years ago and focused on the “great goddess” and fertility cults. The oldest “religious” objects we find are the carvings of a very large woman with huge breasts. It is generally agreed that these are objects of worship as opposed to simple “pornography” of its time.



The first cities (about 10,000 plus years ago) seem to come complete with a fully developed mother goddess religion. There appears to be little or no “male god” of any kind in these early cities, “especially not the “Great Sky god”. So we can safely say that for the first 6-8,000 years or so of the “urban organized religion” it was the female goddess that dominated.

- The most excavated site of these very early cities is that of Çatal Hüyük which is considered the “sister city of Jericho” often called the oldest of cities. These two places seem to be the two ends of the first major trading route (at least in the west) See <http://www.ritualgoddess.com/aboutcatalhuyuk.htm> or <http://www.telesterion.com/catal1.htm> or <http://users.hol.gr/~dilos/prehis/prerm5.htm> In Catal Huyuk, fully 20% of the buildings appear to be shrines to the great mother.
- A striking feature of Çatal Hüyük are its female figurines. Mellaart, the original excavator, argued that these well-formed, carefully made figurines, carved and molded from marble, blue and brown limestone, schist, calcite, basalt, alabaster and clay,

represented a female deity. Although a male deity existed as well, "...statues of a female deity for
<http://en.wikip>



Personnal photo

The worship of the mother goddess also seems to be the predominant religion of the great river society of the Indus River valley dating back some 6,000 years.

- In view of the large number of figurines found in the Indus valley, it has been suggested that the Harappan people worshipped a [Mother goddess](#) symbolizing fertility (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization)

In addition, as late as 1500 BC or so, it appears that the Minoan culture was one that was focused on the worship of a variety of female deities, with little or no male consorts or independent male gods

- The Minoans worshiped goddesses. Although there is some evidence of male gods, depictions of Minoan goddesses vastly outnumber depictions of anything that could be considered a Minoan god. (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_culture#Religion)
- For more on the role of the goddess in the West, see about Marija Gimbutas and her research http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marija_Gimbutas

So again, from what we know, we can also safely say, that for at least 8000 years of "civilized" religion, it was the mother goddess that dominated.

The evolution of religion towards at first inclusion of the "sky god" and the eventual domination of the sky god concept is also filled with controversy and debate. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sky_God It was first postulated that the process involved the male dominated nomadic peoples who worshiped male gods, conquered various settled populations (who continued the worship of the great goddess), and repressed both women and the female gods. This conquest was mainly seen as spreading through the West with the invasion of the "Indo-European" peoples and the religion based in what was called the proto-Indo-European religion.

Who these Indo-Europeans were and where they came from is also a matter of great debate:

- **Out of India Theory** (OIT, also known as the **Indian Urheimat Theory**) postulates that [Indo-European languages](#) (I-E) originated in [India](#), with [Proto-Indo-European](#)

having spread from [northern India](#) into Central and Southwestern Asia and Europe; and that the [Indus Valley Civilization](#) was [Indo-Aryan](#). The evidence adduced consists mainly of [archaeological](#) and [Vedic textual](#) references.

- This theory is deprecated in mainstream scholarship. The majority favors the [Kurgan hypothesis](#), postulating an expansion of [Proto-Indo-European](#) during the fourth millennium BC from the [Pontic steppe](#), and an [Indo-Aryan migration](#) to India in the early 2nd millennium BC. A minority of scholars favors the [Anatolian hypothesis](#), with Indo-Aryan migration taking place in the 4th and 3rd millennium BC.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Out_of_India_theory

For a detailed view of the Indo-European peoples and their impact on history and culture go to The Indo-European Database (TIED) and look at the Indo-European Chronicles
<http://indoeuro.bizland.com/project/chron/chronf.html>

- This group of people and speakers of a relatively common language came to dominate almost all of Europe, the Iranian Plateau and India. The Greeks, Italic, and Celts are all connected, at least linguistically to this group.

The commonality that linked the religions together included a permanent and powerful priest class, the worship of a “sacred kingship” and division of the society into a rigid clerical and merchant class, a warrior class and a fixed class of peasants and husbandmen.

Some other common relationships between the religions were the role of a priest in sacrificing (mostly animal) and a common belief in birds playing a sacred role. And, most maintain some roles for women in the structure of worship. The role was no longer a dominant or critical one, but was mainly reduced to some form of temple prostitutes, dedicated virgins (holders of sacred documents) or as oracles.

The “great goddess” was not eliminated from the new religions, but her role was restructured to that of either a loving “mother of god,” especially concerning the death and rising gods associated with agricultural societies, or the passive keeper of the home of the chief male god (who mostly maintained silence as the chief sky god had sex with a wide range of other goddesses and human females).

This type of religion that of a dominant sky god, but with multiple gods, often in conflict with each other, seems to have arisen in India about 5-6 thousand years ago. The religious spread with the movement of the Indo European peoples throughout the Eurasian continent (with the noted exception of China and Indo China. The most noted of the Indo European peoples include the Indo-Aryans (Indians), Celtic and German peoples, Slavs, Iranian, Italic and Greek peoples as well as Anatolians and Armenians .

Three examples of evolution of the “Great Mother Goddess”

Inanna: The Sumerian goddess of love, fertility, and war - one of the most important goddesses of the Sumerian pantheon.



Image courtesy of [JBL Statues](#)

Ishtar

The Babylonian goddess of love and fertility.



Image courtesy of [JBL](#)

Asherah

A goddess popular with the ancient Israelites.



Many researchers see Asherah as part of the original “Yahweh cult,” as Yahweh’s consort, who was later purged from the religion by post-Exile Jews.

http://www.pantheon.org/areas/gallery/mythology/middle_east/mesopotamian/inanna.html

The theory of this common root and common religion has many problems, including that of the Egyptians, and the Semitic peoples, who were not Indo-Europeans, but who developed similar religions (sky gods, loving mother goddess) prior to the Indo European “invasion.” They also developed similar class divisions within their cultures long before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans.

In addition, some of the peoples of the Americas also developed similar concepts of religion with similar classes apparently completely independent of contact with the people of Eurasia. (As noted, the theories of pre-Columbian contact dominated my free time for about five years, and are something of great interest to me but not of major importance to this work. If you’re interested in this debates on this see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Columbian_trans-oceanic_contact or <http://www.answers.com/topic/pre-columbian-trans-oceanic-contact>

However, none of the major concepts of Pre Columbian contacts, except for a possible early contact with the Phoenicians, explains the development of the cultural/religion structure in the very ancient Mesoamerican societies (Mayan and far older groups)

So what is clear is that we know far too little to fully explain the rise of the Sky God religions and where and how they came to dominate the previous Goddess religions. The idea that there was even a period of the Great Goddess as the dominant religion was not fully understood or accepted by historians, never mind religious historians, until relatively recently (the last 75 years or so) in the West, even though there is extensive folk history to support the idea.

- The Sky God and the Christian dominance did much to prevent modern people from remembering its religious origins.

So what we can roughly say ... with our limited knowledge is that if we put out a line of human history starting some 50,000 years ago ... it would look something like this concerning the religion

- 50,000 to 25,000 years ago - There appears to be some kind of religion, mostly unknown in its beliefs or structure.
- 25,000 to 7,000 years ago - The religions seem to be dominated by mother goddess worship.
- About 6,000 years ago all kinds of Sky Gods arose in most urban cultures.

Or a timeline similar to this

_____ unknown religions _____ / _____ Mother Goddess _____ / Sky Gods _____

From what we know now, we can safely say that once in power, the Sky God worshipers did all they could to eliminate the practice and the concepts of the great mother goddess as the main center of worship, and that they mainly failed to completely repress the ideas.

- This failure is the core of much of what will be discussed later ... The key point is that a religion never really seems to be completely repressed; the key ideas tend to morph into newer religions or rituals in new religions. For example, the worship of Mary, as the mother of Jesus is only the latest “morphing” of the mother goddess worship.

Where the Sky God worshipers failed to completely wipe out the Mother Goddess, they tended to change the local stories to ones in which the Great Mother was the “god” of the past, and that this was a new era, and that the Sky God was the god of the present. We can see this transition story in the various tales of the Universal Creation stories of the ancients. In these stories, the Great Mother was given a major role in the creation of the Universe, but often ceased to exist, or faded from the story line, as a result of the action. Then the (mainly male) Gods arose and now ruled.

The Greeks/Romans added another layer to the “history of the gods” stating that there was a transition groups which were the Titans who appeared to be the initial set of sky gods who were themselves replaced by another group which won control of the universe through a “clash of the titans.”

The Hindu religion also tells of wars between gods and the rise of a new set of gods to replace a previous set of other male gods. The Mayan religion talks of the rise and fall of whole sets of gods that were periodically replaced as one “universe” ended and another began.

- With careful reading of the Bible we can see that this tradition continued as the Jews/Hebrews attempted to reject the older version of the Sky Gods (A Pantheon or a set of gods) and replace it with the concept of the One God Sky god. (“There were giants in those days.”)

As with the Indo Europeans coming in to rule, the worshipers of the Great Goddess, the Hebrews/Jews could not just say that the old beliefs did not exist, but that they were not

important, or only played a role in the distant past (creation, or just past creation). The stories and legends were just too well known by all the peoples of the area to be ignored. For example, by the time the Hebrew Bible was being developed and the creation story of the Western religions was incorporated into its dogma, the stories were already old, vastly old.

- With the discovery of the Gilgamesh tablets and the great epic poem of the Sumerians we know that the tales appearing in the bible (Noah) were more than 3000 years old by the time the Jews were working a very abridged version of the story into their sacred works.

The Hebrew/Jewish Bible was actually consolidated well into the Classical world, and the stories of the Greeks, as well as the stories of the Ancients, were also well known to the writers. The Hebrews/Jews just couldn't ignore them, but they had to make them less important than their history and their god.

With this point of view, the incredulous and seemingly contradictory (to monotheism and the later Christian claim that Jesus was God's only begotten son) statements of Genesis 6 makes some sense.

- ¹And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, ²That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. ⁴There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. ⁵And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.



Gilgamesh the prototype of so many ancient heroes – whose stories were told at least 3000 years before the Bible wrote him off with the flood story – Personal photo from the Museum of Antiquities in Ankara Turkey

So here, the writers of the Bible say ... yes the gods mated with the earth girls (earth girls were easy then too it seems.) But, the times that it happened were in fact evil times. There were Titans (giants) and the Sumerian and Greek heroes (men of renown, Gilgamesh to Heracles) or the demigods of other peoples, those who were the by-products of this mixing of male gods and female humans. To paraphrase, the Bible --- the legends of the past, of all the cultures around them, did exist... but, unlike how the Ancients and Classical people saw this period, these were not good times, but evil times.

- The writers of the Bible seem to be saying that these times (the pre-flood cultural period) were the past, and now, with the flood, the “new world order” of our God was coming into existence. Like the Great Goddess and the Indo Europeans, the Hebrew/Jews writers did not reject the heroes and gods of the

past, but basically said they were wicked and evil, unimportant, and after the flood, “the times they are a-changing.” (OK, slipped in one more Dylan line)

The Christians of the late Classical period some 1000 to 1500 years later (based on when you date the development of the Hebrew Bible) used the same approach when dealing with the “pagan” world. The early Christians never said that the old Greek/Roman gods did not exist (so much for the Christians being monotheist). Denial of the gods just would not have made sense to so many of the peoples to which they were appealing. The concepts of the Greek/Roman sky gods were just too embedded in the culture and the minds of the masses of the populations.

- So the Christians said that the old Greek and Roman Gods, as well as the newer rivals of Christianity (Sol Invictus and Mithra) did exist, but were in fact demons and that the people of the Ancient and Classical period, having been tricked by the Devil, were in fact demon worshipers.
- Belief in Christ meant rejecting the Devil’s tricks. And the new world, of the new God, and the new savior of the Christians, started a new era. The “good news” of this new era was upon the world, just as the Sky worshipers claimed when they were fighting against the Mother Goddess, and the Jews did when fighting Pantheonism

The Jews, especially the Jews of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, had worked to free themselves of much of the ritual and format of the religions of the surrounding peoples (at least during the lead up to the struggle with the Greeks and Romans, and in the post-Temple period).

The Christians, however, adopted almost all aspects of the existing structure of the Roman religion (as well as many aspects of the Egyptian cults) including titles and design of the churches. The new overlay of Christ as the savior was applied to much of the existing religious culture. Deeply embedded in this new structure was also the Ancients belief in the need for human sacrifice in time of crisis, which was adopted, at least in format, by the Christians. Meanwhile the Jews - at least the Jews of the Second Commonwealth - rejected the concept altogether.

It is here that we see the results of the crisis of the Ancients’ world, and later the crisis of the Roman world. On one hand you see the effort to purge away the old entirely (Jewish, and later Muslim efforts) and the effort to integrate (or morph) the old into a new model (Christianity). Why and how this diversion took place is the next part of this story.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section II – A Far Too Quick Review Of The Development Of Religion

Subsection B How Religions Change - A *Study of History* model

As noted in Wikipedia, in [A Study of History](#), [Arnold J. Toynbee](#) argues:

- That as civilizations decay, they experience a “schism in the soul,” as the creative and spiritual impulse dies. In this environment of spiritual [nadir](#), a few prophets (such as [Abraham](#), [Moses](#), the [Prophets](#), and [Christ](#)) are given to extraordinary spiritual insight, born of the spiritual decay in the dying civilization.

He describes such prophets as “surveyors of the course of secular civilization who report beaks in the road and breakdowns in the traffic and plot a new spiritual course which will avoid those pitfalls.”

- Thus, Toynbee argues, the “high points” in secular history coincide with the “low points” in spiritual history, and vice versa.

He notes that:

- The call of Abraham followed the defiance of God by the self-confident builders of the [Tower of Babel](#);
- The mission of Moses was to rescue God’s chosen people from the fleshpots of [Egypt](#);
- The prophets of Israel and Judah were inspired to preach [repentance](#) from the spiritual backslidings into which Israel lapsed in its ‘land flowing with milk and honey’ which [Yahweh](#) had provided for them; and
- The Ministry of Christ, whose passion reflected the anguish of the Hellenic Time of Troubles, was the intervention of God himself for the purpose of extending to the whole of Mankind the covenant he had made with Israel.

As Toynbee projects

- While these new spiritual insights allow for the birth of a new religion and ultimately a new civilization, they are ultimately impermanent. This is due to their tendency to deteriorate after being institutionalized, as men of God degenerate into successful businessmen or men of politics. ...
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_religion

Since Toynbee looks mainly at the West, he missed noting the rise of Confucianism in China. This philosophy/religion developed as a response to the seemingly endless warfare and chaos of the “Warring States period,” and can also be seen as a prime example of his theory.

Regardless of his use of the Bible as history, the conceptual model of Toynbee that the secular demise leads to the rise of religion as individuals struggle to address the new problems created by new “failed states,” is critical to understanding the premise of this work.

This concept of secular demise leading to religious “reforms” fully describes the issues related

to the “holy land” beginning, to a degree, with the arrival of the Assyrians, and accelerating with the arrival of the Babylonians and Persians. However, the impetus for religious reform really comes into play with the great cultural conflicts created with the arrival of the Greeks, and later the Romans.

- What we see over this period of time is a series of political crises that lead to a series of “spiritual” crises.

As we look at the history of the area, we will see that the “Israeli/Judean/Jewish” state fails time and time again. We also have seen that the Phoenician states, while enjoying greater prosperity than the “Israeli/Judean/Jewish” states, also, in the face of the new Greek and Roman states, fail. The peoples who survive this destruction are stripped of wealth and prestige (and in many cases, freedom, as many survivors are sold into slavery to offset the cost of the wars). The people who actually survived looked for new answers, and often the “political” routes were blocked. Therefore, they turned to the “spiritual” to explain the failure, or the “end of the world.”

To understand this premise a bit more, we need to ask some key questions. Again, these are questions based in the mundane, not the divine, questions based in the concept that not all things are predestined by God, but that events have occurred randomly and by chance. So, just a few for instances:

- What would the West have looked like if the Persians had won in their wars of conquest against the Greeks?
- What would the religion of the West have looked like if Hannibal had taken Rome and burnt it to the ground, and planted salt all along the Tiber?
- What would the West be like if Attila had won his battles against the Romans?

Of course, we can not really answer these questions (for with every possible change there are multiple other options that occur). It’s become almost a play ground for historians to discuss the concept of “What if” in an area of discussion called “Counterfactual History”, in which people

- explore history and historical incidents by means of extrapolating a timeline in which certain key historical events did not happen or had an outcome which was different from that which did in fact occur http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterfactual_history

There is a series of books called “*What if*” in which noted historians speculate about the impact of events occurring or not occurring. In our discussion, we can see extensive areas of “What ifs” that took place in this time period that enabled the rise of monotheism as we know it. (And, for those of you who wish to see the events as the “acts of God”, and inevitable; that is your choice and at least in this country, your right.)

For the purpose of this book, just some of the events that we will need to think about that could have gone differently include, what if:

- The Assyrian conquered Jerusalem (and the completely exiled all of the tribes of Israel and Judah)

- There was no assassination of Amon, and therefore the no rule of Josiah (and his efforts at religious reforms)
- The Book of Deuteronomy, that laid the foundation for the Josiah reforms and the later reforms of the religion during the Exile, was not “found” hidden in the temple?

And as we will soon discuss; what if:

- There were no milder policies of Babylon for the Judean exile, which allowed for the continuation of the Jews in exile, as opposed to the harsher Assyrian model
- Cyrus and the Persians did not allow the return of the Jews from exile and the building of the second temple.

And of course, this type of “fun” can go on for ever;

- What if Alexander had been killed early in the invasion of Asia, or Caesar had not been assassinated?

Our view of Hellenism, Rome and consequentially, our view of Phoenicia, would be greatly different if these two events had occurred; but they did and we have the current “timeline” in which we live.

Literature, movies and TV shows (from Star Trek to the Simpsons) have all had fun with “altering of history” sequences. One of my personal favorites was a *Star Trek the Next Generation* episode in which a “rift in the time continuum” allowed all the various time line options to crash into one time-line, resulting in billions of Enterprises (their star ship) appearing in the same space, but all representing different timelines where events had occurred slightly or massively differently from “the real time line.” While trying to correct the problem the “correct time line Enterprise” communicates with some of the other Enterprises. During the contacts, there were references to previous shows, and these “alternative” Enterprises were suffering the consequences of different endings (not the positive ending we had seen) of the previous episodes.

- The theory presented in the show is that “under any situation, all possible options that can occur do occur, and all time lines are created based on every possible option.”)

With all these political crises that came rushing into the region of the Middle East, during the time from about 600 BC to the “time of Christ”, the metamorphosis or as we have said the “morphing” of religion and religious ideals, really took off.

- This long running crisis started the Phoenicians and “Jews” with the arrival of the Persians. It started for the Israelites/Judeans earlier, with the coming of the Assyrians and Babylonians, not so much because of religious differences between the peoples, but with the utter defeat of the two Yahwehist kingdoms.

So, for the Israelites/Judeans, the series of political crises starting in the late 9th Century created the first time of reconsideration; Phoenicia was far less impacted by the Assyrians and Babylonians, in that they managed to mostly withstand the conquest of the new super powers of the day. Their first major political crisis came in the 6th century BC, when the Persians arrived on the scene, with not only a new political dynamic, but a new religion as

well.

- And as we will see, in both the realm of politics and religion, the peoples of the area (Phoenicians, Israelites, Judeans, and later the returnee new Jews) had the same basic response to the new ideas as most people when faced with these types of crises; acceptance, resistance, merging and morphing.

With first the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans, these political crises must have seemed almost unending. The religious “response” was also almost continually in flux and conflict, and these religious controversies reached their height in the West during the first four centuries of the “post-Christ era.”

On both the political and religious grounds, there was extensive resistance to the “new world order” that came about with these invasions of new peoples and new ideas; and when the political resistance failed (which it mostly did), based on the concepts of Toynbee, the religious approaches came more to the center. And again, in the religious answers offered there were answers that ranged in all four of the areas: acceptance, resistance, merging and morphing.

What emerged from the political and religious struggles resulting from the political crises, what was added to the religion and what was rejected as “non-truth” becomes clearer as the political crises and the new religious ideas are explored. However, with this exploration we can see how the development of Christianity was greatly influenced by these crises, with the long interplay of the religious views of the Ancients (Phoenicians), Persians and the Classical world, and the forced interplay between them as the result of the “rise and fall of great powers” (and in the case of the Jews, the rise and fall of lesser powers).

Therefore, to understand this process that led to the creation of this “new” religion, Christianity, we do need to again return to the political issues of the time, and how the people of the time interpreted these events. We need to understand that the crises were multiple and had various impacts on various peoples; among the crises that we need to cover are:

- The arrival of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires
- The rise of Persia and its new religion
- The coming of the Greeks and their new philosophies and culture
- The resistance of the Jews to the Greeks and then the (failed resistance) to Romans
- The Roman Crisis of the Third Century (and the ending of “freedom” in the Roman world)
- The internal crisis of the Christian churches, and its “war on itself” and “its war on Paganism” (and the repression of “thinking”)
- The collapse of the Roman Empire, and the destruction of the great cities by the “barbarian hordes”

Again, forgive me because I can not do justice to any of these events with the depth or detail needed.

Each of these crises created dramatic changes in both the political and religious landscape of the time. And as each of the four groups who respond to change (accepters, resisters, mergers and morphers) played themselves out, in the process of response, we can see the emergence of the new religions that dominate the world today. But what we also see is, in the end, the dominant religion in the West, Christianity, seems to be, at least in critical areas, the “morphed” version of the religion of the Ancient Phoenicians, and not really the outgrowth of the Jews.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection A - All Politics Are Local

As seen, the struggle between the mother earth religions and the sky god religions took place over the course of thousands of years (or a very long time). However, once dominant, the sky god religions, with its various forms helped to create a relatively stable religious and cultural “world” for some 2000, perhaps 3000 years or so. However, the world of the “Near East” began to change dramatically with the rise of the super powers of the “land between two rivers”; first came the Assyrians, then the Neo-Babylonian Empire or the Chaldeans and then the Persian/Medes. This period covers the time from roughly 800 BC to 500 BC.

The following time line from “Factmonster” gives a general idea of the events during this three hundred year period. Like many historical analyses, it ignores much of Phoenician history. Therefore it doesn’t show that while deeply impacted, the Phoenicians survived most of the invasions intact, (much as they also had survived the invasion of the Sea People, some 4-500 years earlier). So, while the “Jewish States” were swept aside by the new super powers:

- The city of Tyre (or the main city of Phoenicia) withstood siege after siege during this time,
- The Kingdom of Israel was completely destroyed never to be reestablished again, and the Kingdom of Judea was spared from the Assyrians, but was then later overwhelmed by the Babylonians. The resulting Babylonian exile appeared to be, at the time, permanent and final exile.

We really do not have the records to show what the Phoenicians thought during this time (or how they responded in their religious rites). We know almost nothing of the heroic leaders who led the people in their long resistance to the seemingly unbeatable empires. Mainly, we only have the Bible to tell the Jewish side of the story ... the side that seemed one of almost complete defeat and, through the words of the prophets, a period of predestined defeat, due to the sins of the people and use of the empires by God to punish the people for their sins.

A brief time line of the period shows:

800–700 B.C.

Assyrian king Sargon II conquers Hittites, Chaldeans, Samaria (end of Kingdom of Israel) Prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah. First recorded Olympic games (776 B.C.).
Legendary founding of Rome by Romulus (753 B.C.). Earliest written music. Chariots introduced into Italy by Etruscans.

700–600 B.C.

End of Assyrian Empire (616 B.C.)—Nineveh destroyed by Chaldeans (Neo-Babylonians) and Medes (612 B.C.). Founding of Byzantium by Greeks (c. 660 B.C.). Building of the Acropolis in Athens. Solon, Greek lawgiver (640–560 B.C.). Sappho of Lesbos, Greek poet (fl. c. 610–580 B.C.). Lao-tse, Chinese philosopher and founder of

Taoism (born c. 604 B.C.).

600–500 B.C.

Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar builds empire, destroys Jerusalem (586 B.C.). Babylonian Captivity of the Jews (starting 587 B.C.). Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Cyrus the Great of Persia creates great empire, conquers Babylon (539 B.C.), frees the Jews. Athenian democracy develops. Aeschylus, Greek dramatist (525–465 B.C.). Pythagoras, Greek philosopher and mathematician (582?–507? B.C.). Confucius (551–479 B.C.) develops ethical and social philosophy in China. The *Analects* or Lun-yü (“collected sayings”) are compiled by the second generation of Confucian disciples. Buddha (563?–483? B.C.) founds Buddhism in India.

<http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0001198.html>



Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection B - Impact of Assyrians and Babylonians on Religion and Culture – the Politics

The history of the Assyrian empire is again too broad of a subject to be explored here. For an over view of this Empire's history see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria>

However, for the purpose of this work, we need to say that the religious life of the Assyrians fit well into the context the Ancients, a pantheonistic religion with myths very similar to that of Babylon and Phoenicia. Therefore, the invasion of this Empire into the “holy land” area and its limited successes against Phoenicia and its eventual complete success against Israel had little substantial impact on the religion of the Phoenician states: the political impact for Phoenicia was severe, but the cultural impact far less

- The pace of Assyrian activity in Phoenicia quickened in the ninth century B.C. when Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, and Adadnirari III exacted tribute and taxes from Sidon, Tyre, and other Phoenician cities. Assyria was gradually extending its control over the Levant. As a result of the far-reaching reorganization of the Assyrian Empire by Tiglathpileser III (744-727 B.C.), the nature of the impact on Phoenicia changed from one of occasional demands by raiding armies to incorporation as vassals into the empire.
- During Sennacherib's reign (705-681 B.C.) he crushed a serious revolt by coastal cities in 701 B.C. and forced Luli (Elulæus), king of Tyre, to flee to Cyprus where he died. Later Sidon revolted against the Assyrian ruler Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) who in 676 B.C. sacked and destroyed it and in its place built a governor's residence, called Kar-Esarhaddon, for a new Assyrian province. He also made a treaty with Baal, king of Tyre. Ashurbanipal (668-627 B.C.) laid siege to Tyre ... but failed to take the city. <http://phoenicia.org/history.html>

So while reduced in power by the Assyrian onslaught, in Phoenicia, most of the cities continued to function, and trade continued, as did for the most part the religion of the peoples. The Phoenicians fared better than most peoples under Assyrian control often having almost complete independence, and offering some tribute. Even when they revolted, most of the cities survived and most of the leadership were spared death or exile. (see http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/PER_PIG/PHOENICIA.html)

However, for the poorer inland nations of Judea and Israel, the story with Assyria was different and had profound impact on the life and religion of the peoples (and therefore, the development of the modern religions of the world). The cries of the prophets in Israel to reform were mostly ignored by the leaders as well as the people. It appeared to all around that the gods (and rituals associated with these gods) of Phoenicia eventually came to the aid of their peoples, after the six year Assyrian siege of Tyre failed. The fate of Israel, on the other hand, was much different.

This period of one hundred and thirty five years, between 721 and 586 B.C, is one of almost constant danger and destruction for the peoples soon to be known as Jews (by then the

Israelis and Judeans). This period was the setting of some of the most noted books of the prophets in the Bible, in which these prophets were calling for religious reform, and for the kings and people to abandon the ways of the Phoenicians and others. Without such reforms the prophets said that punishment and destruction was sure to follow. And, what ever the cause, whether divine or political, the destruction did come.

The Assyrians (in two stages) conquered and eliminated from history the northern kingdom of Israel. In addition they all but destroyed Judea with only Jerusalem holding out. Depending on one's interpretation the relief of Jerusalem came because of divine intervention, poor Assyrian sanitation, an Egyptian army, or perhaps sheer luck. In addition, when the Assyrian empire fell, the Babylonian (or the Neo-Babylonians as historians call these people) came and also (in at least two phases) destroyed the Southern kingdom, and in two waves, took most of the remaining living persons in Judea, with any skills, away into exile. This time, however, unlike the Assyrians, who (supposedly) sent the northern kingdom survivors into the vastness of the northern steppes, the Babylonians took these Judeans into the heartland of the Empire, into Babylon itself.

The success of the Assyrians wars is captured in the Old Testament book of *Chronicles* (and also supported by the known Assyrian writings). In events now seen as taking place in 740 BC, (as we currently measure time) the first successes begin.

- [I Chronicles 5:26](#) And the Elohim of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.
- [II Kings 15:29](#) In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

The second war occurred some twenty years later in approximately 721 BC and is described in the book of Second Kings:

[II Kings 17:3-6](#):

- 5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.
- 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took [Samaria](#), and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Captivity_of_Israel

The effort of Assyria to take Judah failed in one of the great “mysteries” of the Ancient world. The Assyrians descended upon the small kingdom and in 701 laid siege to the relatively minor capital. According to the legends later stated in the Talmud, and from the writings in the Bible, an angel of the Lord came down and killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night, causing the Assyrian King and all others to take flight.

- The [Old Testament](#) relates how Hezekiah clad himself in [sackcloth](#) out of anguish from the [psychological warfare](#) that the Assyrians were waging. However, the prophet [Isaiah](#) assured Hezekiah that the city would be delivered and Sennacherib would be cut down

with the sword. The Old Testament states that during the night, an [angel](#) of Yahweh brought death to 185,000 Assyrians troops. When Sennacherib saw the destruction wreaked on his army, he withdrew to [Nineveh](#). Jerusalem was spared destruction. <http://www.answers.com/topic/assyrian-siege-of-jerusalem>

There has been many theories put forth to explain this “salvation of Judea.” ranging from a plague (Herodotus, and McNeil) to a rescue army of Kusite (Nubian) Egyptians who defeated the Assyrians at the almost completely forgotten Battle of Eltekh (see Henry T. Aubin [The Rescue of Jerusalem: The Alliance Between Hebrews and Africans in 701 B.C.](#)) to reports that the king of Judea simply bought off the assailants with a substantial tribute.

However, no less of important historian than William McNeil states that this event was one of the most important in world history, in so far as:

- ... if Sennacherib had taken the city, the culture of monotheism may have failed to achieve the widespread popularity it enjoys today through the various Abrahamic faiths. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Siege_of_Jerusalem

In addition, the invasion of Judah began a movement towards religious reform, initiated by King Hezekiah. The reforms included:

Hezekiah concentrated worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem, suppressing the shrines to him that had existed till then elsewhere in Judea (2 Kings 18:22).

He abolished idol worship which had resumed under his father’s reign. He abolished the shrines and smashed the pillars and cut down the sacred post. He also broke into pieces the bronze serpent which Moses had made, for until that time the Israelites had been offering sacrifices to it “(2 Kings 18:4).

He resumed the Passover pilgrimage and the tradition of inviting the scattered tribes of Israel to take part in a Passover festival (2Chronicles 30:5, 10, 13, 26). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hezekiah>

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection C - Impact of Assyrians and Babylonians on Religion and Culture - The Religion

But the reforms did not take hold and with the retreat of the danger of Assyria, the peoples of Judah returned to the religion of their past, including it appears, to the practice of human sacrifice. This return to the practices of “other nations” was strongly supported and prospered under the reign of King Manasseh, which lasted some 55 years. .

2 Kings 21

- 1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years..... 2 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. 3 He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. 4 He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put my Name.” 5 In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. 6 He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

This return to the worship of Ba’al and the other gods of the “neighboring peoples” is the source of God’s future wrath upon Israel that he later executes through the King of Babylon.

2 Kings 21:

- 10 The LORD said through his servants the prophets: 11 “Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols. 12 Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. 13 I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. 14 I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their foes, 15 because they have done evil in my eyes and have provoked me to anger from the day their forefathers came out of Egypt until this day.”

Please keep in mind that from what historians can tell, these writings, (much as the writings about Jesus foretelling of the destruction of the second temple) were written after the fact. Most historians see this section of Kings as a product of the Exile period, rather than a prospective writing, which does adequately foretell events to come.

But once again, after the death of Manasseh, reforms were attempted. After the two year reign of Amon, a son of Manasseh (whose short reign was due to a failed palace coup, but where the king was killed), a young king, a son of Amon, the slain monarch, came to power

and after some eighteen years of rule, (as a child king) he, all of a sudden attempted to reinstate the reforms of his great grandfather.

These reforms, known as the “Deuteronomy Reforms,” according to the Bible, were quite extensive. The story of how the reforms began is one of some interesting luck or contrivance.

- While Hilkiyah (the high priest) was clearing the treasure room of the Temple (2 Chr. 34:14), he found a scroll described as “the book, book of the [Torah](#)”/”הספר ספר התורה” (Second Kings 22:8) or as “the book of the Torah of [YHVH](#) by the hand of [Moses](#)” (2 Chr. 34:14). ... many scholars believe this was either a copy of the [Book of Deuteronomy](#), or a text that became Deuteronomy as we have it.

The book of Deuteronomy is a second telling of many of the laws put forth in the Bible, and had been up to this point lost and its writings unknown to the people of Judea (or in fact to the “lost tribes” of the people of Israel . <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuteronomy> Although attributed more or less as Moses’ farewell address (Old prophets never die ...) given to his people, as the Hebrews are about to cross the Jordan, the sequence of the commands and the focus on certain subjects within the text appears to make it look like these were a new writing of the old laws, for a new time. In other words, there is much speculation that Deuteronomy was compiled by Hilkiyah, or his priests, in another attempt to bring Judah back “to the side of God.”

So the Bible tells us that

- Hilkiyah brought this scroll to Josiah’s attention and the king had it read to a crowd in Jerusalem. He was praised for this piety by the [prophetess Huldah](#), who made the prophecy that all involved would die peacefully (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chr. 34:22-28).
- As the fate of King Josiah shows, this prophecy was not fulfilled. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josiah>

As we read the efforts and tasks of Josiah, it would appear that in his time, as Assyria declined and Babylon rose, there was little difference between the religions of the Phoenicians, nor any of the other peoples in the Ancient world.

It’s worth noting that this was some 400 year plus after the supposed time of David, or some 600 plus years after the time given for the death of Moses.

- We must read this listing with the understanding that for more than 75 years (under Manasseh, who reigned for some 55 years, Anom, who reigned for two years and Josiah first 18 years), and for most of the history of Israel, and a good part of the history of Judah,) that the religion of these people, at least the kings. and what also appears to be the masses of the people, were involved in a Pantheistic sky god model, complete with a mother god and child sacrifice.

In Mark Smith’s *The Early History of God – Yahweh and the other Deities in Ancient Israel*, one of the most important scholarly works on this time period, Dr. Smith states:

- Pre-exilic ... Israelite religion apparently included worship of Yahweh, El, Asherah and Baal. (page 7)

- The development of a national (Yahwehist) religion and a national god did not exclude other deities; indeed at times they were encouraged. (pages 9-10)

We have little information to clearly state how large the cult of Yahweh really was during this time, or if it existed at all beyond a few prophets, who were almost constantly under attack from the powers that be. At the same time we need to clarify that the monarchs were not Anti-Yahweh, but simply not exclusive Yahwehist.

Again as Mark Smith states in *The Early History of God*:

- The monarchy has been perceived as an institution hostile to “pure” Yahwistic cult. ... While this viewpoint is partially true, it is also misleading. The monarchy generally maintained a special relationship with Yahweh, Yahweh was the national god and patron of the monarchy. (page 11)

Then in the 18th year of Josiah, the new work or newly found work, was read to all the people of the kingdom (or at least that is what is stated), and the King gained a commitment to support these laws. And in what could be one of the most important chapters in the Bible, we read of the reforms instituted.

2 Kings Chapter 23

1 And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

2 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

3 And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites (male temple prostitutes), that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings (for Asherah) for the grove.

8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor

of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city. ...

10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire (sacrifice) to Molech.

11 And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

12 And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

13 And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

19 And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Bethel.

20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant.

22 Surely there was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah;

23 But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this Passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.

24 Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

<http://www.gospelhall.org/bible/bible.php?passage=2Kings+23&search=&ver1=kjv&ver2=&commentary=&submit=Search>

All the actions of Josiah, as well as those of his great grandfather show that the religion of the time, the religion that Josiah campaigned against was really the religion of the Canaanites and Phoenicians.

We find the justification for these attacks many places in Deuteronomy including:

Deut 18:9

“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”



The signet ring of king Manasseh who's 50 year reign was "cause" of the destruction of Judea, for his use of human sacrifice

Yet all these reforms of Josiah and the new Deuteronomists were not enough ... for just as the list of accomplishments is made, we read:

Kings 23:

26 Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.

27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

The reforms were not enough to save Judah, nor were his good acts enough to save Josiah from death in battle. (Kings 23)

29 In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and King Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.

Again, these texts were most likely written in Exile, after the fall of Judea. There had to be some justification of why the great reforms of Josiah were not sufficient to win back God to the side of Judah. And according to the Bible, the sins of the Grandfather were too much to be wiped away by the efforts of the young reformer king.

Besides, the successor kings of Judah ignored the reforms of Josiah and returned to the “old religion”; the next king, Jehoiakim, was dedicated to the religion of Manasseh and eradicated the reforms of Josiah. It is no wonder that in the Bible it states that during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the Jewish people were sacrificing their children in hopes of gaining the support of their god against the new super power. And the new superpower was making itself strongly felt.

- With the defeat of the Egyptians at the battle of the **Battle of Carchemish** (perhaps making Josiah's effort to confront the Egyptians a valiant self-sacrifice for an ally) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Carchemish the future of Judea was determined by the new empire, the Neo-Babylonian Empire or as it was also known at the time, the Chaldean Empire

However, with the crisis developed by the coming of the Assyrians and the loss of the Northern Kingdom, it appeared that through the "discovery of the book of Deuteronomy" the foundation was laid for future religious reforms. It would not make much sense to the people of the time that if the reforms had been implemented, that Babylon would win (which they did), so the writers in Exile, stated that the sins of the Grandfather were too great and that the later kings rejected the reforms, laying the foundation for an explanation of the success of Babylon.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection D - Basic Law of Nature?

We must clearly understand that despite the retrospective view of the Bible on these events, and the bewailing for hundreds of years of the prophets of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms, of the fate of the people for rejecting the laws of Yahweh, the people of the time must have felt that they were in fact acting well and in their own interest.

- Therefore, both Manasseh and Josiah thought they were doing right, in both religion and politics, for their nation.

As a modern basis of capitalism, it is assumed that peoples do not deliberately act against their own well being. We see in the worst of the modern dictatorships rationales that on some level made sense and were powerful enough to gain support despite what we now know ... in retrospect, to be “evil.” During the initial stages of gaining power, and even during a good part of their rule, almost all of these dictatorship were respected as doing good by many nations in the world (including at times, by many people in the United States).

- In Germany, Hitler was trying to return Germany to its “rightful” place within the world of nations after the “stab in the back” which ended WWI and was trying to rectify the worse parts of the treaty of Versailles, which humiliated his country.
- In Russia, Lenin and Stalin were trying to prevent the “counter-revolution” against the workers and peasants from coming about and bringing with it the “White terror” (And in many places where the Whites did gain power ... the fears of there being a counter revolution were shown to be true), and to fend off the ever present threat of foreign invasion (which did occur with British, American, Japanese and other nations occupying large parts of Russia starting in 1918).
- In China, Mao was using the “Great Leap Forward” and the “Cultural Revolution” to help China develop economic self-sufficiency and to protect the revolution from, what he knew from the study of history, degeneration as the children of the revolution grow into power without experience of participation in the fighting.
- In Spain, Franco was protecting the people of Spain from the philosophy of Anarchy and Communism, and also protecting Christians from the Godless Left.
- In Cambodia, Pol Pot was trying to purge the Cambodian people from the impact of 200 years of colonial influence and corruption. He wanted to “get the people back to the land” and away from the evils of drugs, prostitution, the break down of the family, and the evils of capitalist exploitation.

None of these people saw themselves as evil, and all saw their acts as necessary for a “higher good.” It was the unfolding of history that allowed for the evaluation of all these people as “evil” and “insane.” Based on the “what if” concepts, if German had won WWII, or the USSR had won the cold war, we would see “history” (and some of its players) very differently.

A Classical writer stated it best ... Treason doth never prosper ... what's the reason? Why if it prosper, none dare call it treason. (Ovid)

The eventual triumph of monotheism (as presented in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) allows the world of the Bible to ring down to us in this time, through which we see these kings and so many of these people as “doing evil in the eye of the Lord” and being punished for it.

- It must be clear to us, in this time, that this is not how people felt at the time. They did not sacrifice their children thinking that they were “evil” for doing so. They did not worship at idols or use male prostitutes because they saw it as evil. They saw it as needed and important to please their gods.

We must understand, following the approach of this book, that it was not predestined that the rise of monotheism was inevitable. The rise of monotheism (or what passes as monotheism in this world) was a result of the conflicts discussed within this book, not the act of God. The fact that things progressed as they did was based on a series of events that could have changed extensively with slight changes in history (as McNeil pointed out concerning the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem.)

- Those who believe in predestination, see the history of the world as events under the watchful eye of the creator, while I see it as random chaos.

However, away from philosophy and “what if” projection and back to the issue of religious impacts on the peoples of the Near East resulting from the invasions of the Assyrians and Babylonians:

- Concerning the religious practices of the Phoenicians, there was little new influence from these new great empires, for the most part.

Yet the invasions did seem to have a greater political reaction; the rise of the Assyrians seems to be the chief impetus for the Phoenicians in establishing, or expanding the New City (Carthage) and other places, far from the reaches of the land based Assyrians. We see Phoenicians increasing efforts to establish safe havens for themselves, if the worst occurred with the Assyrians. (We already read about the king of Tyre gaining safe haven in Cyprus.) As the attacks of the Assyrians and then Babylonians increased, the amount of focus on the colonies also increased.

In some ways this is like Hong Kong during the 1980's and early 1990's. The settlement between the United Kingdom and China to, in 1997, return sovereignty of Hong Kong (with a “special status”) led to extensive efforts by the major Hong Kong Chinese trade families to create “safe havens” for themselves and their dependents, in several areas around the world. None really knew if China would keep their word, and allow for the “special status.” Therefore, people began planning for the worse.

These Hong Kong families started to establish “branches” in Canada, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and in other locations, sending out their children to each of these locations and providing them support for the creation of new family centers. This Hong Kong Diaspora affected many national economies (mostly for the better) as well as their cultural and racial make-up. The outflow to Canada was close to one million persons, and focused in mainly Vancouver and Toronto. The “joke” became that Vancouver was going to change its name to Van Kong or Hong-couver.

While the Chinese central government has respected the agreements on Hong Kong (for the most part) the network established as a result of the families taking steps still exists, as part of the grid that is greatly changing the world's economic systems in the early 21st century to the benefit of China.

This process of “establishing safe havens” among the Hong Kong Chinese was, in all probability, not consciously modeled on what the Phoenicians of the 9th and 10th centuries BC did in the face of the rising powers. They created Carthage, among other locations, as the place that, if the cities of Phoenicia were to fall, the peoples of the cities would flee to for freedom. While Phoenicia was greatly damaged during the wars, the key cities withstood conquest and the culture for the most part was maintained. The families of Phoenicia were able to send many away from the war to safe havens, and these “colonists” then created the new trade networks that greatly impacted the world's economy in the early 9th century BC and clearly for the next 5 centuries to come.

- However, as noted, in the area of religion, the Assyrians and Babylonians had little impact on Phoenicia (and most of the peoples of the area). While the names of gods varied and the myths were not always exactly the same, the entities of the religions were similar enough to have compatibility (pantheonic sky god models of religion).

While there was great political conflict between Phoenicia and the new powers, there was little religious conflict.. While the term “Phoenicia” remained intact and the concept of a Phoenician people remained throughout the Roman/Byzantine era, the term seems to have been eliminated during the early Muslim rule beginning in the 650's AD and even beyond, when yet another major cultural change came about (after nearly 1000 years of Hellenistic rule). See <http://phoenicia.org/index.shtml>

A number of historians ignorantly claim that Phoenicia ceased to exist in 64 BC, when it became part of the Roman world. However, official records indicate that in 425 AD Phoenicia Prima was subdivided into two provinces, [Phoenicia Maritima and Phoenicia Libanensis](#) by the Romans. Further, excavations of at Tel Kadesh (158 BC) in Israel as well as the witness of Saint Augustine (400 AD), Church Councils of Tyre (449 & 515 AD), the Fall of Phoenicia to the Arabs (640 AD) and the honorary living title “**Metropolitan Archbishop of Phoenicia Maritima**” which Lebanese bishops continue to carry are a few of many solid proofs that Phoenicia and its people live on despite the misinformation

We still call England, England, even though the Angles have long since ruled. (and despite conquest and occupation by the Danes, and Normans). Ancient names persist despite change in cultures and rulers.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection E - That's the Way God Planned It. That's the Way God Wants It To Be

The impact the coming of the Great Empires on the “Israelites/Judean/Jews” in religious terms, however, was very interesting and quite different than most peoples of the time outlook.

- Traditionally, in the Ancient world, if a people were conquered, the world view of the time was that “their gods were stronger than our gods” and often the conquered peoples more or less accepted the gods of the conquering people as superior to their gods, or at least as worthy of worship.
- The conquered peoples usually only asked for acknowledgement of their gods (even in defeat) and for permission to continue to worship their gods. (After all we are dealing with similar “universal” views concerning the gods (again pantheonic sky god models of religion))

The Jews, or at least those who were the strong supporters of the Yahweh as the one true god, derived an (almost) unique response to defeat by the foreign powers; this new response was:

- The people of Israel and Judah were defeated not because the gods of the conquerors were better and stronger than their god, but because their god, Yahweh, was using the enemies of Israel and Judah simply as tools to punish Israel and Judah for not living according to the rules of God.

(Like the projections of Jesus some six centuries later) The prophets of the Old Testament tell of calamity and crisis faced by the peoples of the two kingdoms. Despite the cries of the Prophets of Israel, the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom, and as we see in II Kings, by the time reforms were attempted in the South, it seems that it was too late.

As we have seen:

- 2Ki 23:26 Nevertheless, the LORD did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger.
- 2Ki 23:27 So the LORD said, “I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, ‘There shall my Name be.’”

And as we've also seen, the reforms did not hold anyways.

The role of the prophet in Ancient Judea and Israel seems not to be understood very well by the modern reader of the Bible. In large part, this is because we have gotten mainly the Canonical prophets, the ones that made it into the Bible. So to the typical modern reader, it sounds like there were a few and “accurate” people running around the land making really good projections about the future.

- To a modern reader it makes little sense that the people would not listen to these wise insightful people, when all their predictions seem to come true.

However, this is not truly the picture of how the “prophets” really functioned in the old Israel and Judah. It seems that there was quite an extensive “prophet industry” with many people taking a shot at it (somewhat like the “prophet corner” in Monty Python’s movie, *The Life of Brian*). The prophets that made it into the Bible were actually a vast minority of those deemed to actually be prophets.

- A Jewish tradition holds that there were 600,000 male and 600,000 female prophets. (Of this vast number), Judaism recognizes the existence of 48 male prophets who bequeathed permanent messages to mankind
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophet#Prophets_in_the_Tanakh_.28Hebrew_Bible.29

If there were that many involved in prophecy over the years, the prophet was a major portion of the population. What was the “line” of these other 1,299,952 prophets who did not get a book in the Bible? In most cases we are not sure, nor can we ever be so.

However, we can see some cases where the majority of the prophets of the time seem to be in disagreement with those who eventually become “canonical” prophets (much like the political talk shows on television like “Hardball” – get a few pundits and let them argue with each other --- good entertainment). A case in point is Jeremiah’s struggle against the coming war with Babylon; Jeremiah opposed fighting Babylon, while most prophets seem to support it.

Jeremiah 27:

- 9 So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers who tell you, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon.’ 10 They prophesy lies to you that will only serve to remove you far from your lands; I will banish you and you will perish. 11 But if any nation will bow its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let that nation remain in its own land to till it and to live there, declares the LORD.

Jeremiah here was preaching a “defeatist” line that did not go over well with the “patriots” of the time; Jeremiah was promoting surrender over fighting. If he was on TV today, he would be blasted as many “doves” are blasted today. And he had strong numbers of other prophets claiming to be right (no pun intended). Their conventional wisdom held that the war with Babylon would not end in defeat, but in freedom for Judea. So we begin to see some of the dynamics of the 1,299,952 prophets who did not get a book in the bible, their prophecies turned out to be popular at the moment, but wrong over the long haul, in retrospect.

However, for the purpose of this book, we can only look at some of the forty-eight who came to be “official” prophets. We need to be most concerned, during this section of discussion, with those lived and did their prophesying of doom in the northern kingdom, and those prophesying doom in the southern kingdom; which limits us to roughly fifteen people.

The clear purpose of most of the Prophets during this time period was to call upon the people to repent and “return” to the way of God (although it is unclear if the mass of the people ever really practiced the “way of God” during any previous time.) This from Jeremiah Chapter 5 is somewhat typical of the scolding that these types of Prophets would deliver to the King and the people of the land.

Jeremiah Chapter 5

21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and

see not; which have ears, and hear not:

22 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: ...

23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

25 Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.

26 For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

27 As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

<http://www.gospelhall.org/bible/bible.php?passage=Jeremiah+5&ver1=kjv>

This is actual among the more mild denouncing of the people offered from the Canonical prophets. Here is Ezekiel being more attacking.

Ezekiel Chapter 14

- 12 The word of the LORD came to me: 13 “Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, 14 even if these three men—Noah, Daniel ^[a] and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.
- 15 “Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, 16 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate.
- 17 “Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, ‘Let the sword pass throughout the land,’ and I kill its men and their animals, 18 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.
- 19 “Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals, 20 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness.

http://www.biblegateway.com/passages/?book_id=33&chapter=14&version=31

Over time, however, another purpose of the prophets arose; to present Yahweh, as the one God, not just the supreme God (which implies there are other Gods), but the one and only God. The tone used concerning supremacy and the message of this “only” God changes from prophet to prophet over time. Since we can not really accurately date when these writings occurred, it is hard to really make a projection on how this tone evolved. However, the texts written in the Babylonian Exile, and shortly before the return, are decidedly more monotheistic.

- In progress of the texts from the sequence of the writing, it appears we move from a message of “look out heathens” ... to a message of “look out Jews.”

In the Prophet Obadiah, considered an early prophet of the Monarchal era, and talking about an earlier assault on Judea (by the Assyrians,) we read:

Obadiah,

- **11** In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.
12 But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.
13 Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity;
14 Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.
15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

Here the prophet is saying, “Look out! My God will kick your god in the butt when he is good and ready ...”

In Isaiah we get a differing point of view showing God to be God of all, and the decider of all things. Therefore, armies win or lose based not on the rivalry of gods but on the will of the one and only god

In Isaiah Chapter 37, we see the leadership of the kingdom asking for God to attack the Assyrians and save them.

Isaiah Chapter 37

- ... You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made the heavens and the earth. ...
- Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands,
- and cast their gods into the fire; they destroyed them because they were not gods but the work of human hands, wood and stone.
- Therefore, O LORD, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, alone are God.”

But Isaiah answers differently.

- Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent this message to Hezekiah: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: In answer to your prayer for help against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, (despite the Judeans arrogance)
- 33 Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not reach this city, nor shoot an arrow at it, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast up siege works against it.

- 34 He shall return by the same way he came, without entering the city, says the LORD.
- 35 I will shield and save this city for my own sake, and for the sake of my servant David.

However, Isaiah also says that Assyria is also the tool of God. In 10:5,6 Isaiah declared that God would make use Assyria "...to send dishonor upon thine honor" Invincible Assyria would merely serve as a tool in God's hands.

Isaiah Chapter 10:5,6

- **5** O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.
6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ...
10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria:
11 Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? <http://www.dynamispublications.org/030707.html>

This point is brought out even more in later prophets. Here in Jeremiah, we see that the "sins" against God and ignoring God, become so grave, that God uses the powerful nations of the world to attack and punish the two nations that were supposed to be dedicated to God ...

Jeremiah Chapter 5

- **11** For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. ...
15 Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.
16 Their quiver is as an open sepulcher, they are all mighty men.
17 And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.

And that power was not only the Assyrians, but also the Babylonians...

- The Jews are said to have stopped living by the required standards which God had given them. The Lord, according to the Scriptures, used the Assyria and Babylonia nations as tools to punish the Hebrews. From 721 to 586 B.C.E. the Israelites were embattled, overcome and exiles. In 586, the Babylonians burnt the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and held the people there captive for approximately 50 years.
<http://www.diversiton.com/religion/main/judaism/history.asp>

Understanding why Israel was destroyed and Judea carried off into exile as an expression of God's will, was itself, as represented in the "prophets," a progression of thought. In reading the "prophets," the invaders were transformed from "heathens" to "tools of God".

This time of almost unceasing invasions and defeats with the new powers from the East, forced vassalage, continued for Judah for 150 years and sometimes Judah was also in

conflict or alliance with Egypt and this country too demanded loyalty and tribute. The last of the new Ancient powers to confront Judea was the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The process that led to ultimate destruction of Judea was a long and complicated series of events, over a twenty year period, involving many kings, and at least three major sieges of Jerusalem:

- By the seventh century B.C.E., Assyrian supremacy over the Near East began to wane. In 612 B.C.E., the Babylonian king, Nabopolassar, overthrew Assyrian domination and laid claim to its lands, including Judea. Nebuchadnezzar II, the son of Nabopolassar, ascended the throne in 605 B.C.E., and Judea was subjugated as a vassal state. When in ca. 598 B.C.E., King Jehoiachin of Judea refused to pay tribute, Nebuchadnezzar responded with military force. He captured Jerusalem in 597 and banished Jehoiachin to Babylon with 10,000 other Judeans, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel.
- After Jehoiachin's exile, Nebuchadnezzar replaced him with Zedekiah, whom he considered more cooperative with Babylonian policies imposed in the region. Nebuchadnezzar's own chronicle of the battle for Jerusalem from ca. 597 B.C.E. provides a historical record of the siege of Jerusalem. In it, he details how he "encamped against the city of Judah [Jerusalem] and on the second day of Adar, he seized the city and seized the king. He appointed a king of his own pleasure over it [the city]. He took a significant tribute and conveyed it to Babylon."
- When a new Jewish king several years later rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians ransacked Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and deported the majority of the remaining population to Babylon in 586 B.C.E.
http://www.jewishhistory.com/jh.php?id=Babylonian&content=content/rivers_babylon

And in then in Exile, the tone and the message of the prophets changed again. In good part, this is due to the different policy of the Babylonians towards conquered and exiled peoples, where the Assyrians set them to the "wilderness" the Babylonians brought them to the "heartland of the Empire" and settled them together in the great cities of Babylonia. This allowed the survivors of the wars a place and time for the continuation of the Judean culture and to, once again, rethink what was happening to them as a people.

- Unlike the Assyrian deportation of Israelites from the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.E. that resulted in the lost ten tribes through assimilation into Assyrian culture, the deported Judeans formed their own community in Babylon and retained their religion and practices....

And in fact, the Jews actually became "Jews" here in Babylon in that they recreating the religion, to be mostly monotheistic, and re-wrote the Bible to fit the new reality of the destruction of the Temple

- It is likely that the Torah, the Jewish Bible, took its final shape during this period and became the central text of the Jewish faith. Lamentations and many Psalms, including Psalm 137, "By the Rivers of Babylon," were written during this period of expulsion.
http://www.jewishhistory.com/jh.php?id=Babylonian&content=content/rivers_babylon

This idea of using exile as a means of rethinking and organizing for change is nothing new and is quite understandable. If we look at current world history, over, say the last century plus, we can see countless examples of this process repeated in some form or another.

Some of the more familiar examples are from the period of “revolution” of the early twentieth century. These include, but are in no way limited to the following:

- Lenin did most of his important writing and development of theory while in exile in Switzerland
- Ho Chi Minh developed the anti-imperialist concepts that eventually dominated much of the third world while in exile (working as a dishwasher) in Paris
- The Irish revolution was mainly planned and funded by Irish immigrants to the United States
- Castro re-planned his revolution for Cuba while in exile in Mexico (after a failed first effort)

Here, in Babylon, the prophets of the exile, laid the foundation for other Jews to come. The religion of Yahweh was rethought and given the promise of “one more chance.” These prophets saw the failure of the last 1500 or so years from the time of Abraham, and his departure for Egypt, through the time of the poverty and slavery in Egypt. They also saw the failure to maintain the Davidic kingdom, and even to remain loyal to God in the two small kingdoms, as something that was needed, and was part of God’s plan to bring the people closer to God.

The leaders of the exile and the prophets of the exile saw that the punishment would soon be forgotten, the sins forgiven, and they promised that Judea would rise again.

- The Bible describes the Babylonian conquest not as an imperial power overwhelming a smaller state, but as a sign from God that the kingdom of Judea had not behaved with the proper piety. It interprets the exile as punishment for sin, not as imperial policy to control a conquered enemy. According to this interpretation, the kingdom could be restored and the covenant could live on if the people of Judea repented.
- The interpretation could also remove geographic limits from the covenant: Jews could serve God anywhere on Earth. Historians do not know how many Jews believed the latter interpretation; they do know that it became the officially recognized ideology of the community’s religious leaders and that it was instrumental to the ability of many Jews to retain a distinct identity despite their dispersion
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567959_4/Jews.html

And the Prophets of the exile promised that Yahweh will reconsider his anger, and allow for the return the holy land and the development of a community recognized by all as the “City of God” and a land protected and without fear. Many of the later prophets talked of this including, the later or pseudo Isaiah”

Second Isaiah Chapter 60

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible/isaiah/isaiah60.htm>

- 10 Foreigners shall rebuild your walls, and their kings shall be your attendants; Though I struck you in my wrath, yet in my good will I have shown you mercy.
- 11 Your gates shall stand open constantly; day and night they shall not be closed But shall admit to you the wealth of nations, and their kings, in the vanguard.
- 12 For the people or kingdom shall perish that does not serve you; those nations shall be utterly destroyed.
- 13 The glory of Lebanon shall come to you: the cypress, the plane and the pine, To bring beauty to my sanctuary, and glory to the place where I set my feet.

- 14 The children of your oppressors shall come, bowing low before you; All those who despised you shall fall prostrate at your feet. They shall call you “City of the LORD,” “Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”
- 15 Once you were forsaken, hated and unvisited, Now I will make you the pride of the ages, a joy to generation after generation. ...
- 18 No longer shall violence be heard of in your land, or plunder and ruin within your boundaries.

Again we read in Jeremiah 29

- 10 This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

To achieve this blessed physical existence (and it was a promise for a physical existence based in traditional Jewish world views) the people needed to purify themselves and their practices, rejecting the religion of others and focusing on the “true” practices involved in the worship of the one true god.

However, while the message was being developed and the books adjusted to present this new concept. The people of the Exile were faced with some attractive alternatives.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection F - Oh, What A Time It Was, A Time It Was. A Time Of Innocence

For of all the places that the Judeans could have been exiled to ... who could complain about Babylonia? This was at the time, the “center of the world”. If we take how the western world currently thinks of ancient Rome, Victorian London and modern New York City (and throw in Washington DC) this is how the Ancient world saw Babylon. (Again, there is not enough space to do this subject of the glory of Babylonia justice, therefore for more detail, please look at <http://history-world.org/babylonia.htm>)

As the inheritors of Sumer, the city of Babylon was the center of religion and thought and “all things desirable” for more than two thousand years before the Exile began (again, a very long time.). Here seemed to be the source of all known science, including the incredibly important study of the “starry hosts” of the skies. Astrology, which developed in the area of the land between the Two Rivers, millennia before, was seemingly “perfected” by the priests and researchers after the eons of continuing studies and this knowledge was passed on through the writings of Cuneiform. Cuneiform writing was different from that developed by the Phoenicians, but along with hieroglyphic of Egypt and other locations it seems to be one of the oldest form of writing used in the West.)

In addition, this was not a decayed ancient city that the Jews arrived in, but a brand new metropolis, recently rebuilt using all the newest technologies of the time, and with extensive loving care, having spared no expense. This rebuilding was actually paid for by the Assyrians in retribution for the destruction of the city by a previous Assyrian king. The Assyrian action, of sacking and destroying Babylon, taken while repressing a rebellion in the southern part of their empire, had shocked almost all the ancient world (far more then the attack on Israel, which in the Ancients mind set, was almost a non-event).

- Sennacherib (r. 705-681BC), was the destroyer of Babylon. Sennacherib’s successors, Esarhaddon (r. 681-699BC) rebuilt it <http://history-world.org/bab2.htm> .

Now on top of the rebuilding, it was also the seat of empire. The new and vigorous empire of the Chaldeans, in combination with nomadic peoples of the Steppes had managed to destroy the much hated and feared Assyrians. The Chaldeans gained much of the Assyrian empire, but not Egypt. However they did add Judea as a land not completely conquered by the Assyrians. Of course, to the Chaldeans, Judea probably seemed to be a fairly small consolation for the failure to conquer Egypt.

- And as noted the Chaldeans could never take Tyre, after thirteen years of siege, and had to negotiate terms with the Phoenicians to establish over-lordship.

But still this city that the Jews came to was the center of both the Ancient’s world of the past (their past) and also the center of the new force of their current world.

However, the influence of Babylon on the actual religion of the newly arrived “Jews” is hard to say. For it appears that most of the key stories of the Babylonians had already been incorporated into the Hebrew Bible. (Although one, could argue that they were not fully developed and represented until the time of the Exile.)

- The Noah story (or simply the flood story) was known in Babylonia for millennia and it was in the Bible already, with only slight variations between character names and the motives of gods between the two versions.
- Having the hero and establisher of the rules of the nation being cast adrift, as an infant in a small boat of reeds was being told about Sargon I of some 1000 years at least before the time of Moses.
 - Sargon I - King of Akkad c. 2334–c. 2279 BC, and founder of the first Mesopotamian empire. Like Moses, he was said to have been found floating in a cradle on the local river, in his case the Euphrates.
<http://www.tiscali.co.uk/reference/encyclopaedia/hutchinson/m0022738.html>

Sargon I



Code of Hammurabi

A great set of laws cast in stone (such as the Code of Hammurabi) was also given to the people by key rulers, again, dating back at least five hundred year prior to Moses (again, a very long time.)

- The Code of Hammurabi was one of many sets of laws in the [Ancient Near East](#). Most of these codes, coming from similar cultures and racial groups in a relatively small geographical area, necessarily have passages that resemble each other. The earlier code of Ur-Nammu, of the [Ur-III](#) dynasty (21st century BC), the [Hittite](#) code of laws (ca. 1300 BC), and [Mosaic Law](#) (traditionally ca. 1200 BC under [Moses](#)), all contain statutes that bear at least passing resemblance to those in the Code of Hammurabi and other codices from the same geographic area. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Hammurabi
 - To read the complete text of the code please go to:
<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/CODE.HTM>

Babylon was the “absorbing culture” of the time. Almost all peoples emulated the society and tried to be like them. The key struggle of the Exiles (a traditional absorber culture) was to avoid following the path of so many other peoples that had simply faded into the Babylonian matrix: The goal of the leaders and prophets of the period of Exile was to keep the Jewish religion intact, and refuse to accept the opulence and seductiveness of the Babylonian cities.

- The leadership tried to make the exile become a time of complete reflection and search for understanding of why God had allowed his people to end up in exile in the first place.

Much of the effort of the leadership to keep from being just another absorbed culture is summarized in one of the more famous psalms in the Bible:

Psalm 137

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
- 2 There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
- 3 for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
- 4 How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?
- 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill .
- 6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy.

However, of course, to some, the exile was not a punishment at all, but even perhaps a reward; God had brought them to the heart of the empire, with relative few restrictions and access to all the wealth and joy of the world. For some Jews, assimilation into the Babylonian world was not far off, and if political events had not occurred which changed the opportunities for Jews, we may have seen the slow withering away of the Jewish mindset and the gradual disappearance of the Jews into the greater worldly culture of Babylon; the traditional absorption process of the great empires.

As it turned out, this slow process of assimilation did not occur, with the somewhat rapid and unexpected fall of the Babylonian empire (which we will soon discuss). However, we need to see what the impact of the Exile was on those not willing to easily fall into the Babylonian world. These resisters made the effort to understand what had caused this seemingly insurmountable disaster that had once again fallen upon the Jewish people. To understand the response, we need to again visit the Bible, and the prophets and read what was written

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section III – A Time of Crisis

Subsection G - What Went Wrong? You Wants to Know What Went Wrong? Well I'll Tell You What Went Wrong ...

The writers of the Bible (or at least the re-writers of the Bible, sitting in exile in Babylon after “God’s vengeance”, were saying (in my paraphrasing),

We’ve just been destroyed ... (in this case by the Babylonians). Our temple ruined, we’re dragged of into exile and, all that we have ventured to do over the past 1000 years is gone. – Why? Because we did not hear the word of God, our leaders were corrupt (and corrupted) and followed other Gods, and we did not listen to God’s prophets and their demands that we live life according to God. So, we need to purge ourselves from doing evil, so God will smile upon us again.

One of the key elements in this purging process was to try and rid the remaining people, those who survived the war and march into exile, of all practices associated with other religions. Included, in this was the development of a strict abhorrence of all that is associated with the religions of the Phoenicians, including the rituals of “passing through the fire.” Many of the impacts to the religion of the Judeans of the Exile were in the areas of religious structure and approaches. However, one key thing that was needed was hope; hope of a return. And this was found in the writings of the prophets (although it's unclear when they were actually written).

- And this whole land [of Israel] shall be a ruin, and a waste, and these nations [the tribes of Israel] shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when the seventy years are fulfilled, that I will punish the king of Babylon ...” (Jeremiah 25:11-12)

So the people were told there was an end it sight to the exile.

In addition, the people, based on the Babylonian laws, were allowed to keep their political and religious structure and organizations. The leader of the exiled was declared king in all but name, with the title of *Resh Galusa* (meaning head of the exiles), and provide state subsidies for maintaining a royal household within the Babylonia area.

- The title is best known in the West as Exilarch. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exilarch>
This title was kept by the Jewish community of Babylon, and later Iraq, for centuries with the title passing to some 43 people over the next 1500 years

The key change to the Jewish community in Babylon, however, was the breaking away from a “central temple” concept (which would again return in later years), to one of “community organizations” around what became known as a synagogue, with local leaders responsible for local education (Rabbis) and with scribes, supported by the Exilarch, available to provide copies of the full text of the Bible to all of these communities.

Therefore, the religion of the Exile became a “mass base” religion, more or less, for the first time in Yahwehic history. The cult of Yahweh was perhaps for the first time really uncontested among the Jews of the Exile (of course there were local gods to compete with, but Canaanite El and Baal, were mainly not there; at least not by those names).

- The religion of Yahweh was no longer a “remote” religion isolated from the people and based on temple visits three times a year; but was now a religion that was taught in a uniformed fashion (based on a centralized production of text) by a trained corps of instructors, with in a relatively tight area of control (the areas in and around Babylon where the Jews were assigned).

The ideas of Sabbath, and circumcision, and the reforms of Josiah were fully explained to the people. Also, the Passover celebration took on new relevance, since the people were once again in exile in a distant land by a river.

In addition, the scribes began to keep track of the debates that arose over the meaning of terms and phrases. These debates, and their outcomes, started to become a new tool used in the explanation of the laws to the original exiles and the next generations who grew up having never seen or experienced Israel, or the first temple.

- These early debates and their recordings became the foundation for the second most important set of literature in the Jewish tradition, something officially created over the course of hundreds of year, during the Babylonian and later also the Roman periods of exile, the Talmud. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud>

Therefore, the relatively easy exile to Babylon set up the framework by which the Jewish community would be able to respond to the much harsher exile of the Roman, and later the challenges of Christian eras. In these later times, after the defeat at the hands of the Romans, we see the formal development of Rabbinical Judaism, the use of local synagogues, and, the personalization of the holidays and the use of debates (the Talmud) as a means of maintaining the religion without relying on a central temple. The foundations for these responses were all present in this Exile, in function, if not in name.

- The Hebrew name for a synagogue is “Beit Kneset” which means House of Assembly. It also goes by the names “Beit Midrash” (House of Study) and “Beit Tefilah” (House of Prayer). The three terms refer to the three fundamental functions of the synagogue:
 - 1- Assembly of people, to know each other, to help each other spiritually and socially, and to help others.
 - 2- Study of the Word of God, and how it is applied to the daily life.
 - 3- Prayer to the one and only God: Jews can satisfy the obligations of daily prayer by praying anywhere; however, there are certain prayers that can only be said in the presence of a minyan (a quorum of 10 adult men), and tradition teaches that there is more merit to praying with a group than there is in praying alone
- It was during the Babylonian captivity that the system of synagogue worship, if not actually introduced, was at least reorganized on a systematic plan, with Ezra as one of the main leaders ([Ezek. 8:1; 14:1](#)). The [exiles](#) had no Temple, and they gathered together for the reading of the law and the prophets as they had opportunity, and after their return to Israel synagogues were established all over the land ([Ezra 8:15; Neh. 8:2](#)). <http://biblia.com/jesusbible/synagogue.htm>

While this structure worked towards avoidance of absorption into the Greater Babylonian culture, it did not, however, get to the key issue at hand that needed to be addressed by the Exile leadership:

- Why had God allowed this to happen? What had we done wrong to allow this disaster to have befallen the Jewish people?.

The answer clearly was given to the exiles by the new writings, and by somewhat rewriting the past. The answer was that God was enraged with them for “whoring after the gods” of other nations and in practicing un-needed and unwanted sacrifices, mainly that of sacrificing children.

- In other words, God punished the Jews for worshiping like the Phoenicians, practicing Ba'alism.

To regain God's love and protection, the Jewish community had to purge themselves of all things “non-Jewish”, of all things associated with Ba'alism, or the religions of the other nations.

The Exile leaders saw that the key need was to address the reforms listed above by King Josiah, especially the elimination of the worship of other gods, mainly Ba'al; the Exile leader stripping from the writings (and trying to eliminate from the oral tradition) that Yahweh had a consort, and that “graven images or symbols” were needed for worship, and especially that human sacrifice (the passing through fire) was needed to please God.

- **2 Kings Chapter 23**

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites (male temple prostitutes), that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire (sacrifice) to Molech.

13 And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant.

24 Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

<http://www.gospelhall.org/bible/bible.php?passage=2Kings+23&search=&ver1=kjv&ver2=&co>

[mmentary=&submit=Search](#)

The book of *Deuteronomy* became the central organizing tool of the leaders of the Exile. And what was required by God was based in not just the Ten Commandments given to Moses at Sinai, but all the rules given to the people mainly in Deuteronomy, but also in other books of the Bible as well.

- One of the key elements from reading the books was the responsibility of the whole nation to be loyal to God and to allow no transgression. Religious diversity was not to be tolerated.

Part of the reason for the loss, and exile was that the people had allowed unclean and unacceptable practices, including child sacrifice to have happened without objection (except by a few prophets): The reworked Bible now stressed the responsibility of the community to take action:

(Leviticus 20:1-5; see also 18:21)

- The Lord said to Moses, say to the Israelites: “Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.

This concept of mutual responsibility for being “his brother’s keeper” and maintaining compliance, or to face the wrath of God, is perhaps the source of most religious intolerance in the West. Since this concept states that the whole community is at risk if it allows for “wrong” religious practices to exist and to be practiced. If it is not enough that the good do good, based on this concept, the good must prevent evil as well. Over the centuries this has come to be the basis for the demand for religious conformity, and efforts to repress freedom of religion, at least in the West (Something to be discussed in far greater detail in the second book of this work) The constant fear was that God would let loose his wrath again, and all of the society would fall to ruin, as had Israel and Judea.

- From the Old Testament, and transferred into both the New Testament and the Koran, is the belief that it is not sufficient to be god fearing, but it is also necessary to keep all the members of your ulmma, your community in line too; for God will not judge based on the holiness of one person, but of all the people.

And the rules wherein God demands conformity were not (and are not) just a few; while in Exile, the scholars developed an extensive concept of what was “right living.” In Exile, in these books of the Bible, they determined or revealed not just Ten Commandments of God, but 613 commandments by which people needed to live and perform to gain the love of God.

- According to tradition, of these 613 commandments, 248 are *mitzvot aseh* (“positive commandments” commands to perform certain actions) and 365 are *mitzvot lo taaseh* (“negative commandments” commands to abstain from certain actions). (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_commandments)

This was the code of ethics that the Jews of Exile were given, by the trained staff of the King of Exile, and were taught in uniform presentations, by the newly trained staff of the new synagogues; and perhaps enforced by a “religious police”.

- And like the code of Hammurabi, which was a major influence on the traditional culture of so many peoples of that time, the Jewish law codes cover extensive areas of daily life such as with whom you can and can not have sex and also when you can have sex. Included were texts on how to treat a slave, and how judges must act, and what can and can not be done in war, etc.

But many if not the majority of the 613 commandments deal directly with how to worship Yahweh, and how not to worship other Gods, and how to punish those who worship wrongly. Here is a partial listing of the 613 showing the numbers related to worship, (but not including the rituals of holidays, sacrifice and of kosher food, which are also considered part of this personal relationship with God.)

- To know there is a [God Ex. 20:2](#)
- Not to entertain thoughts of other gods besides Him [Ex. 20:3](#)
- To know that He is [One Deut. 6:4](#)
- To love Him [Deut. 6:5](#)
- To fear Him [Deut. 10:20](#)
- [To sanctify His Name Lev. 22:32](#)
- [Not to profane His Name Lev. 22:32](#)
- Not to destroy objects associated with His Name [Deut. 12:4](#)
- To listen to the [prophet](#) speaking in His Name [Deut. 18:15](#)
- Not to test the prophet unduly [Deut. 6:16](#)
- [To emulate His ways Deut. 28:9](#)
- To [cleave](#) to those who know Him [Deut. 10:20](#)
- To love other [Jews Lev. 19:18](#)
- To love [converts Deut. 10:19](#) ..
- To know there is a [God Ex. 20:2](#)
- Not to entertain thoughts of other gods besides Him [Ex. 20:3](#)
- To know that He is [One Deut. 6:4](#)
- To love Him [Deut. 6:5](#)
- To fear Him [Deut. 10:20](#)
- [To sanctify His Name Lev. 22:32](#)
- [Not to profane His Name Lev. 22:32](#)
- Not to destroy objects associated with His Name [Deut. 12:4](#)
- To listen to the [prophet](#) speaking in His Name [Deut. 18:15](#)
- Not to test the prophet unduly [Deut. 6:16](#)
- [To emulate His ways Deut. 28:9](#)
- To [cleave](#) to those who know Him [Deut. 10:20](#)
- To love other [Jews Lev. 19:18](#)
- To love [converts Deut. 10:19](#)
- Not to hate fellow Jews [Lev. 19:17](#)
- To reprove a sinner [Lev. 19:17](#)
- To [learn Torah Deut. 6:7](#)
- To honor those who teach and know Torah [Lev. 19:32](#)
- Not to inquire into [idolatry Lev. 19:4](#)

- Not to follow the whims of your heart or what your eyes see [Num. 15:39](#)
- Not to [blaspheme Ex. 22:27](#)
- [Not to worship idols in the manner they are worshiped Ex. 20:5](#)
- Not to worship [idols](#) in the four ways we worship God [Ex. 20:5](#)
- Not to make an idol for yourself [Ex. 20:4](#)
- Not to make an idol for others [Lev. 19:4](#)
- Not to make human forms even for decorative purposes [Ex. 20:20](#)
- Not to turn a city to [idolatry Ex. 23:13](#)
- To burn a city that has turned to idol worship [Deut. 13:17](#)
- Not to rebuild it as a city [Deut. 13:17](#)
- Not to derive benefit from it [Deut. 13:18](#)
- Not to missionize an individual to idol worship [Deut. 13:12](#)
- Not to love the missionary [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to cease hating the missionary [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to save the missionary [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to say anything in his defense [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to refrain from incriminating him [Deut. 13:9](#)
- Not to prophesize in the name of idolatry [Deut. 13:14](#)
- Not to listen to a false prophet [Deut. 13:4](#)
- Not to prophesize falsely in the name of God [Deut. 18:20](#)
- Not to be afraid of killing the false prophet [Deut. 18:22](#)
- Not to swear in the name of an idol [Ex. 23:13](#)
- Not to perform *ov* (medium) [Lev. 19:31](#)
- Not to perform *yidoni* (“magical seer”) [Lev. 19:31](#)
- Not to pass your children through the fire to [Molech Lev. 18:21](#)
- Not to erect a pillar in a public place of worship [Deut. 16:22](#)
- Not to bow down on smooth stone [Lev. 26:1](#)
- Not to plant a tree in the Temple courtyard [Deut. 16:21](#)
- To destroy idols and their accessories [Deut. 12:2](#)
- Not to derive benefit from idols and their accessories [Deut. 7:26](#)
- Not to derive benefit from ornaments of idols [Deut. 7:25](#)
- Not to make a covenant with idolaters [Deut. 7:2](#)
- Not to show favor to them [Deut. 7:2](#)
- Not to let them dwell in the [Land of Israel Ex. 23:33](#)
- Not to imitate them in customs and clothing [Lev. 20:23](#)
- Not to be [superstitious Lev. 19:26](#)
- Not to go into a [trance](#) to foresee events, etc. [Deut. 18:10](#)
- Not to engage in [astrology Lev. 19:26](#)
- Not to mutter [incantations Deut. 18:11](#)
- Not to attempt to contact the dead [Deut. 18:11](#)
- Not to consult the *ov* [Deut. 18:11](#)
- Not to consult the *yidoni* [Deut. 18:11](#)
- Not to perform acts of [magic Deut. 18:10](#)
- Not to [tattoo](#) the skin [Lev. 19:28](#)
- Not to tear the skin in [mourning Deut. 14:1](#)
- Not to make a bald spot in mourning [Deut. 14:1](#)
- To [repent](#) and [confess wrongdoings Num. 5:7](#)
- To say the [Shema](#) twice daily [Deut. 6:7](#)

- To serve the Almighty with [daily prayer Ex. 23:25](#)
- [The Kohanim must bless the Jewish nation daily Num. 6:23](#)
- To wear [tefillin](#) (phylacteries) on the head [Deut. 6:8](#)
- To bind [tefillin](#) on the arm [Deut. 6:8](#)
- To put a [mezuzah](#) on each door post [Deut. 6:9](#)
- Each male must write a [Torah scroll Deut. 31:19](#)
- [To bless the Almighty after eating Deut. 8:10](#)
- [To circumcise all males on the eighth day after their birth Lev. 12:3](#)
- Not to add to the Torah commandments or their oral explanations [Deut. 13:1](#)
- Not to diminish from the Torah any commandments, in whole or in part [Deut. 13:1](#)
- To [learn Torah Deut. 6:7](#)
- To honor those who teach and know Torah [Lev. 19:32](#)
- To [repent](#) and [confess wrongdoings Num. 5:7](#)
- To say the [Shema](#) twice daily [Deut. 6:7](#)
- To serve the Almighty with [daily prayer Ex. 23:25](#)
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- Each male must write a [Torah scroll Deut. 31:19](#)
- [To bless the Almighty after eating Deut. 8:10](#)
- [To circumcise all males on the eighth day after their birth Lev. 12:3](#)
- To rest on the [seventh day Ex. 23:12](#)
- Not to swear falsely in God's Name [Lev. 19:12](#)
- Not to take God's Name in vain [Ex. 20:6](#)
- [To redeem firstborn sons and give the money to a Kohen Num. 18:15](#)

In addition, there were old grudges against old enemies”

- Destroy the seven [Canaanite nations Deut. 20:17](#)
- Not to let any of them remain alive [Deut. 20:16](#)
- Wipe out the descendants of [Amalek Deut. 25:19](#)
- Remember what Amalek did to the Jewish people [Deut. 25:17](#)
- Not to forget Amalek's atrocities and ambush on our journey from Egypt in the desert [Deut. 25:19](#)
- Not to dwell permanently in Egypt [Deut. 17:16](#)

However, we can see that at least a good one hundred of the 613 were directed at how to worship God or how to treat fellow Jews, not to worship foreign gods, and not to use the rituals of worship of foreign gods when worshipping Yahweh.

This 613 was the law code by which Jews were to live by for the next 2200 years, at least until the notion of the Enlightenment led to a less controlled form of Judaism (Reformed Judaism). It is still the primary codex of laws used by Orthodox Jews today. The purging of the old religions from the worship of Yahweh, and the wiping away of those who did practice the old ways was taught in the Exile, and by then those who returned from Exile, as the key to the redemption of the people and developing the new relationship with God (and a new state).

The Exile community was taught that the terrible retribution on the people by God that befell

both Israel and Judah could only be avoided by “never again” allowing the people to fall away from the proper worship of God. Therefore, worshiping idols, breaking the Sabbath, marrying an idol worshiper, and so many other infractions of the new laws became capital offenses.

- This punishment was said to be needed because the risk to the greater community was far too great to allow any transgressions. The Jews had already felt the wrath of God with such horrible results; all steps must be taken to avoid another reoccurrence. Therefore, all persons were responsible for their people’s salvation. “The needs of the many outweighed the wants of the few”

The Exiles’ leadership rejected the concepts noted by Shakespeare centuries later when in Henry V (Act VI Scene I) he has the king say

- Every subject's duty is to the king's; but every subject's soul is his own.

The Exile’s leadership were saying, the actions of anyone can damn everyone’s soul unless everyone acts uniformly, with the rules. Anyone who does not conform must be punished, or else the whole group will suffer.

- While we saw in other cultures the concept of the gods' punishing all for the sins of one (as in the Oedipus tales of Greece), this concept of mutual responsibility for avoiding God’s wrath was really something new, since it was not just the duty of a king or a great leader to conform, but the duty of everyone, no matter how low their station. This universalization of responsibility will have a profound impact upon the whole history of the world.
- The demand for religious uniformity for the sake of the salvation of all the people eventually finds its way into almost all the Western modern religions. (and is the focus of the second book in this series).

The right of the leaders to require conformity and to punish for non-conformity really begins here with the Babylonian exile; it began as tool to try to avoid the absorption of the Jews, and the long term consequences upon the Jews and others continues to play out over the centuries.

We read in the key prophets of this era that the transgressions of the past were obvious Ezekiel 20:

28. And I brought them to the land, that which I lifted My hand to give to them, and they saw every high hill and every many-branched tree, and they slaughtered there their sacrifices, and they presented the provocation of their offering, and there they placed their pleasing savors, and there they poured their libations.

30. Therefore, say to the house of Israel: So said the Lord God: Are you defiling yourselves in the way of your forefathers, and are you going astray after their abominations?

And when you take your gifts, when you cause your children to pass through the fire, you defile yourselves to all your idols until this day, shall I then be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you.

The punishment for the past is harsh ... Ezekiel 6

11. So said the Lord God: Strike with your hand and stamp with your foot, and say, “Ah!” about all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, who will fall by the sword,

through famine, and through pestilence.

12. The one who is far away will die of the pestilence, and the one who is near will fall by the sword, and the one who survives and who is in the siege, will die of hunger, and I shall spend My fury on them.

13. And you will know that I am the Lord when their slain ones will be among their idols, around their altars, upon every hill of height, on all mountaintops and under every leafy tree and under every branchy terebinth, a place where they offered up a satisfying savor to all their idols.

And the laws of living that must be addressed, and the failure to address the laws of living that was the problem: Ezekiel 5

6. But she exchanged My judgments for wickedness more than the nations, and My statutes, more than the lands that are around her, for they rejected My judgments, and as for My statutes, more than the lands that are around her, for they loathed My judgments, and as for My statutes-they did not follow them.

7. Therefore, so said the Lord God: Because you have prepared yourselves [to go astray] more than the nations that are around you; you did not follow My statutes and you did not perform My judgments; and like the customs of the nations that were around you, you did not do.

8. Therefore, so said the Lord God: Behold, I too am upon you, and I shall execute judgments in your midst before the eyes of the nations.

And that it is not just the responsibility of kings and priests, but of all the people of the House of Israel, and the beginning of knowing of a personal god not just with prophets but with any man who would turn away from idols and unto God. (Ezekiel 14)

4. Therefore, speak with them and say to them: So said the Lord God: Any man of the house of Israel who raises his idols upon his heart and the stumbling of his iniquity he sets opposite his face, and comes to the prophet, I-the Lord-I shall respond to him [although] he came with his multitude of idols,

5. In order to take hold of the [people of the] house of Israel in their heart, who have drawn away from Me with their idols, all of them.

6. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, So said the Lord God: Repent and move away from your idols, and from all your abominations remove your faces.

7. For every man of the house of Israel and of the stranger who sojourns in Israel and draws away from following Me, and brings his idols up to his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity opposite his face, and he comes to the prophet to inquire of him about Me, I, the Lord, shall respond to him by Myself.

And salvation for the nation as well ... through the good acts of the individual (Ezekiel 14)

21. For so said the Lord God: How much more when I send [all] four of my evil judgments-sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence-against Jerusalem, [ought I] to cut off from it man and beast.

22. But behold, a remnant remains therein: the sons and daughters who are being brought out. Behold they are coming out to you, and you will see their way and their deeds, and you will be comforted over the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem- all

that I have brought upon it.

23. And they will comfort you, because you will see their way and their deeds, and you will know that not for naught have I done all that I have done in it,” says the Lord God.

And the salvation of the individual through the acts of the individual (Ezekiel,18)

30. Therefore, every man according to his ways I will judge you, O house of Israel, says the Lord God: repent and cause others to repent of all your transgressions and it will not be a stumbling block of iniquity for you.

31. Cast away from yourselves all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, and why should you die, O house of Israel!

32. For I do not desire the death of him who dies, says the Lord God: so turn away and live!”

These books of the Exile had a far different message than the Book of *Genesis*, where we read that Abraham negotiated to spare evil cities if he could find just ten good men in those cities. Now the opposite message was given, that if one man is evil, all are at risk.

These concepts or rules for living were anointed as the only way by which God would forgive Judah. But most important of all was the commitment of the Jewish people, the people of the Exile to the belief in their one God, and the ending of rituals opposed by that God. Key to the Deutoromic reforms was

- Deut. 6:4: Hear O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

This “shama” or the declaration of belief in one God, and a god alone, was the basis of much the future conflicts of the Jews and the Ancient and Classical world; and the key conflict with the future religion of Christianity. The Jews of the Exile developed in Babylon the means to protect their community from absorption, but also set in motion the conflicts that would keep the Jewish people at risk till this present day.

And as noted, with the reforms of the exile, the concepts were moved away from just the rulers and the priest having responsibilities for performance of these rules, but all the people were needed. Without the central temple, without the kingship, in Exile, the Jewish people developed a truly “personal” religion, where the actions of God were not determined just by Kings and Priests, but by the total people.

- It is from this “democratic” vision of religion, most of our Western traditions of the rights and responsibilities of the individual persons develop. It was in this democratization of Judaism, out of necessity, that we find the eventual creation of democratic ideals, and the recognized need to look upon the “citizens” of the state, not just as passive tools of the rulers, but as needed partners in the creation of a good and functioning state (with liberty and justice for all) under “Gods protection.”.

However, we also find in this new concept, the powerful force of “absolutism” and the demand for personal and religious conformity, with the failure to conform an offense punishable by death.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection A - The Only Messiah of the Old Testament

The real and long term impact of the changes in the Judean religion that came about in the Exile period were centuries off. At the time, in Babylon, the Jews (and we can really start to call them that at this point in the story line) were just one of many peoples in exile in Babylon and throughout the Neo-Babylonian empire. They were an insignificant people, among many other insignificant peoples.

To the people of the time, the Neo-Babylonian Empire must have seemed all powerful and destined to rule for a long time, with the exiled Judeans possibly facing indefinite residency. However, there were other forces at work that proved such impressions wrong. Babylon was about to meet the forces of Persia.

Since their arrival on the scene, the Persians, until this day (as seems to be a favorite way of putting things in the Bible) have remained a dominant power in the Middle East. The very term “Persian” or as we say now “Iranian”, derives from the word “Aryan”, and indicates the central role that the Persians see for themselves in world history (and the role they are trying to project today through the leadership of the Islamic Republic today).

- So while the term “Europe” derives from the Phoenician myths, the term “Aryan” derives from the Persians, (or at least they lay claim to the term).

As we know from the Greek histories, Persia was their chief foreign enemy, who dominated the Greeks in Anatolia (preventing Greek expansion in that area) and the ones that came close on two occasions to conquering all of Greece proper. Yet, the warfare did not end there. The Persians were the chief rivals of the Greeks and Romans, for more than 1000 years, and for the most part, were actually the winners in most of these conflicts.

- Despite endless efforts of multiple rulers, only once were the Persians conquered from the West (Alexander the Great). While the successor states of Alexander held much of the “Near East,” Persia itself quickly slipped from Greek control.

The Romans never were able to really break through against the Persians. Trajan's success of 117-119 AD was an ephemeral event that never reached the Persian heartland. Even as the West was being overrun by the “barbarians” the policy of Rome was to concentrate repeated efforts on defeating the Persians (with several Emperors killed during these campaigns, including the famous Julian the Apostate, who was attempting to revive Greek rationalism in the Empire, while still also attacking the Persians). The later Byzantine successes in the mid 7th century were more defensive actions to drive the Persians away from the gates of Constantinople, rather than true attempts at invasion.

While conquered by Islam (from the south) the Persians are among the few who were able to set themselves apart from the Arab conquerors by mainly accepting the Sh'ia form of Islam rather than the “Orthodox’ Sunni branch. The greatest of all the Turkic Sunni peoples, the Ottoman Empire, was in almost constant war with Persia, and could never gain much advantage against them beyond taking control of the Arab lands. The Ottomans may have lost their ability to conquer all of Europe in their long and futile wars to break into the Persian heartland, or in their defensive efforts to prevent the Persians from retaking the Near East.

(The battles between the Ottoman and Persians were fought along the same battle front that was used in the ten year war between Iraq of Saddam Hussein and Iran of Khomeini).

In addition, Persia was one of the few nations of Asia and Africa in the modern Age to avoid overt colonization by the Western powers (along with China, Thailand and Ethiopia and Afghanistan). While being a major battle ground between Russian and English “interests” during the 19th and 20th centuries, the status of Persian independence was maintained while almost all of Asia and Africa fell to direct rule of imperialistic forces.

- Again, the brilliant 2500 year history of the Persians can not be told in detail within the confines of this book. Therefore please see <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/PERSIANS.HTM> for a more complete history

However, the rise of Persia to the status of superpower, came with the fall of the Chaldean (Neo Babylonian) Empire, the sole super power of its time. The Persian rival fell far quicker than anyone of the time expected, and this fall came about because of the rise of the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great. Through a series of brilliant campaigns, Cyrus rose from a minor princeling from a minor people, to the ruler of almost the all of “Asia” in just fifteen years (554 BC to 539 BC) and he continued to expand his territories until his death (in a minor engagement, with nomadic warriors) some ten years later (529 BC).

- Besides his military capacities, for the purpose of this book, he had another unique characteristic: He is perhaps the first conqueror who engaged in war for “religious” motivations, rather than just for the ego or conquest. Part of his success in war came from using, as justification for continual fighting, his responsibility for spreading the newly accepted national religion of the Persians, Zoroastrianism, to all peoples.

He is also the only person, at least the only non-Jew, in the Old Testament to be referred to as the Messiah (and set the role model for many future persons claiming that title.) The Jews saw him as with other great foreign powers, was an instrument of God/Yahweh as is stated in *Isaiah 45.1-8*]

- Thus says the Lord to His anointed [*Messiah*], to Cyrus [...] to subdue nations ... I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, so that you may know that I, the Lord, Who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. ... I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me ...

Therefore, the Persians were perhaps the first “world power” with a different religious framework than the other great powers that proceeded them.

- The Persians were not believers in the traditional sky god pantheon that had dominated the region for some 3000 years or more.

With the Persians came not just a revolution in power and organization (in which the Persians did excel), but also a religious revolution which soon came to dominate the Near Eastern world. The concept of “Dualism” was the essence of this new religion.

This approach to the divine, as noted, included the concepts of good and evil, and the struggle between good and evil being the core issue of the “universe”. Some of the principles of Cyrus’ religion, the religion called Zoroastrianism included:

- There is one universal and transcendental God, [Ahura Mazda](#), the one uncreated Creator and to whom all worship is ultimately directed.
- Ahura Mazda's creation - evident as *asha*, truth and order - is the [antithesis](#) of chaos, evident as *dorugh*, falsehood and disorder. The resulting conflict involves the entire universe, including humanity, which has an active role to play in the conflict.
- In Zoroastrian tradition, the malevolent is represented by [Angra Mainyu](#), the "Destructive Principle", while the benevolent is represented through Ahura Mazda's [Spenta Mainyu](#), the instrument or "Bounteous Principle" of the act of creation. It is through Spenta Mainyu that Ahura Mazda is immanent in humankind, and through which the Creator interacts with the world. According to Zoroastrian cosmology, in articulating the [Ahuna Vairya](#) formula, Ahura Mazda made his ultimate triumph evident to Angra Mainyu.
- Ahura Mazda will ultimately prevail, at which point the universe will undergo a cosmic renovation and time will end (*cf.* [Zoroastrian eschatology](#)). In the final renovation, all of creation - even the souls of the dead that were initially banished to "darkness" - will be (re)united in God.

Also, there was a focus on the need of individuals to live in tune with the struggle between good and evil:

- Active participation in life through good thoughts, good words and good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep the chaos at bay. This *active* participation is a central element in Zoroaster's concept of [free will](#), and Zoroastrianism rejects all forms of [monasticism](#).
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism>

The Jewish religion had much in common with the religion of the Persians (one god, need for good works, etc). However, the Persian concept of the arch rival "all evil one" was new to the Jews, and would have a great deal of influence later, especially with what became Christianity.

The full exploration of the Zoroastrianism and the new concepts presented in this religion of the Persians is once again, too great a task for this book. However, we need to address its influence on the Jews, and all the religions of the region, including the Phoenicians. We also need to more carefully examine its impact on a group which would not be considered much in history; the remnants of the exiles, those half Jewish/half Phoenicians that had remained in the "land of their fathers" and who were not influenced by the changes in the religion made in by the Jews in exile.

To understand this influence we need first to look a bit more at Cyrus and his policies. Again, we can not go into the details needed to fully explain the great king. To explore this more please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_the_Great

However, what may possibly be unique among all the great conquerors of the world, except possibly for the early Muslims, is that though the motivation of Cyrus was apparently religious, he was also tolerant towards other faiths. There seems to have been no efforts by the Persians to force convert the newly conquered peoples. In fact, Cyrus practiced a policy as close to religious freedom as had ever been seen in any empire throughout time. His policies of tolerance have been recognized in the present time as the translations of his works have

been spread through the world by the United Nations.



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Cyrus_cilinder.jpg

The main source for our understanding of Cyrus' positions on tolerance comes from the cylinders found carrying his position, and sent throughout the empire. There are various translations of the famous cylinder that contains some of his decrees, however, one reads in part:

I abolished forced labor .. I returned to these sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which [used] to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I [also] gathered all their [former] inhabitants and returned [to them] their habitations

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_Cylinder

Another translation reads:

The needs of Babylon and of all its cities I gladly attended to. The people of Babylon [and . . .], and the shameful yoke was removed from them. Their dwellings, which had fallen, I restored. I cleared out their ruins. Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced in my pious deeds, and ... the cities on the other side of the Tigris, whose sites were of ancient foundation— the gods, who resided in them, I brought back to their places, and caused them to dwell in a residence for all time May all the gods, whom I brought into their cities, pray daily before Bêl and Nabû for long life for me, and may they speak a gracious word for me and say to Marduk, my lord, "May Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son, their [. . .] I permitted all to dwell in peace

<http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDPCS/meso/cyrus.html>

So while the Jews looked upon Cyrus as someone very special, it is unclear if Cyrus thought of the Jews as special. It is most likely he just saw them as one of many peoples, one of many religions that had been "insulted" by the Babylonians and needed to be appeased. He wanted all the Gods (although he appeared to be a monotheist) to speak to the true god and pray to that god

- Marduk, my lord, “May Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son, their [. . .] I permitted all to dwell in peace

The Jewish Bible records the event in slightly different terms: In Ezra 1:1-8: we read that the decree was directly aimed at the Jews and for the Jews. What we do not know is if there were similar decrees for other religions and other groups, which would seem to be indicated as the intent of the king from his cylinder

Ezra 1:1-8

In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: “Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: “All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him! Let everyone who has survived, in whatever place he may have dwelt, be assisted by the people of that place with silver, gold, and goods, together with free will offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.’ Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and Levites---everyone, that is, whom God had inspired to do so---prepared to go up to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. All their neighbors gave them help in every way, with silver, gold, goods, and cattle, and with many precious gifts besides all their free-will offerings. King Cyrus, too, had the utensils of the house of the Lord brought forth which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his god. Cyrus, king of Persia, had them brought forth by the treasurer Mithredath, and counted out to Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

It is from here, Cyrus's toleration that we see the ability of the Exiles to return to Judea. However, as we will see, few Jews actually took advantage of the offer. And those who did met resistance from an unexpected force. However, Cyrus enabled the foundation of the return to Judea, and the establishment of what was to become known as the “Second Jewish Commonwealth;” at first a very small colony, and later a dynamic force that fought at least four major wars for both national and religious freedom.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection B – A New Market Place of Ideas

The Persian rule with its kindness to minorities did not last all that long. The coming of Alexander ended the “enlightened rule” of the Persians. But during this time of Persian support, they were a greatly admired people by the Jews, and the Persian concepts of religion were studied extensively.

- And then came the Greeks, and they not only ended the Persian rule, they brought yet another set of ideas and concepts, new to the whole area.

So, in the area now called “the Holy Land”, or as was then called by many names, including Canaan, Phoenicia, Israel, Judah, etc. in about a 250 year period, two great “rushes” of ideas, (Persian and Greek) confronted the religions that had dominated the area for some 2500 years. converged within the region. These two new systems of thought converged with a third idea, that of the new religion of the Exile, the returning Jews.

- These new ideas, Persian, Greek and Jewish, raised doubts about the ancient concept of God (or Gods), the concept of “evil” and the concept of salvation that had seemed almost unaltered, by the Phoenicians and the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews for so long, perhaps 3000 years..

Therefore, from the texts of the time, we start to see a great conflict ... a great debate on the very nature of God, combining the four great centers of thought of the time ... The Hellenistic world, the Persian world, and the Ancient world as represented by Phoenicia, (and Egypt), and to a degree, the new Jewish world view.

- While having developed the Jewish concepts in Babylon, the new Jews would also continue to be impacted by Persian and Greek thought; and at the time, the new Jewish concepts were actually marginal to the general debates;

Despite modern views, at the time of these great initial confrontations, the Jews were, once again, minor players.

- For the first stage (the flood of Persian concepts) the Jews were still in exile in Babylon, but through massive support of the Persians, they were able to establish a small colony in Canaan,
- When the Greeks came, the Jews were a smaller loyal province, of the Persian world, but of little importance and added almost nothing to the Empire (unlike the vital Phoenician fleet). For example, in both Jewish and Persian texts, there is no mention at all of Jewish units even participating in the invasion of Greece, when almost all other provinces were noted as sending soldiers.

With the coming of Alexander, at first, the Jewish colony, or province, meekly submitted to Greek rule. (There was no dramatic resistance such as that of Tyre.) It was only much later, after almost 200 years of Greek rule that there is an active Jewish resistance, based on religious grounds.

- During this dreadful war with the Greeks, and in the few years of independence from Greek rule, prior to the coming of the Romans, we see the Jews adopting more of the

Persian views (including the Devil, resurrection of the dead, and other dualistic issues) perhaps as an effort among the Jews to negate Hellenistic concepts.

- With the eventual failure of the new Jewish state, and the process that led to the failure, we soon see Jewish writers and thinkers trying to reconcile Hellenism and Jewish concepts (the most noted of these is Philo of Alexandria (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philo_of_Alexandria . Western modern view of religion; part Ancient, part Classical/Hellenistic, part Persian, part Jewish (and there is some Brahmanism and Buddhism too) There is far more in the modern thinking that comes from the Ancients and Persians than the modern (Western) world wishes to believe.

However, at this point we need to really consider the status of the “Jews’ of the world and how they were divided and how this division led to more conflicts.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection C - Four kinds of “Judaism”

With the implementation of the decrees of Cyrus, allowing the return of the exiles, the followers of Yahweh were rapidly becoming four different “Jewish” communities. And in fact they were evolving into some what different religions, due to the differing political and cultural history of each group.

- Three of these branches remained and evolved somewhat independently of each other over several hundred years. The fourth group becomes part of a major internal fight within Judea, and over time, would lay the foundation for the return of many of the issues that the Jews of Exile try to expunge. As projected in this book, this is the group that comprised the roots of Christianity.

Therefore, following the presentation of this book, we can actually see the “roots” of the “Christian Religion” some 500 year prior to Jesus. I am not just talking here of influences or religious developments, but the actual peoples whose religion literally evolves into the Christian religion,

- The fourth group, described in detail below, are the “Jews” not taken into Exile, and who, for the most part, were never fully incorporated into the new teachings. They are the group that clung hard to the pre-Exile form of worship, and whose descendants are among the first “Christians.”

The first group: Jews who fled to Egypt during the invasions of Assyria and Babylonia (especially Babylonia) and maintained much of the traditions of the Temple Jews, during the later part of the kingdom of Judea.

- A significant Jewish colony was in Elephantine in Egypt - there the worship of God flourished in a new Temple although the worship was not pure in form <http://religion.ucumberlands.edu/hebrewbible/hbnotes/exlnotes.htm>

How much the reforms of Josiah impacted this group, at first is not clear.

- The Jewish community at Elephantine was probably founded as a military installation in about 650 BCE during [Manasseh](#)’s reign, to assist Pharaoh [Psammetichus I](#) in his Nubian campaign. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantine>

Therefore, this group of Jews may not have been influenced by the reforms of Josiah, never mind the Exile. There is just not a lot of information to say one way or the other. However, we know that they broke with tradition by building a temple away from Jerusalem, and maintained the traditional Yahwehist culture long after the defeat of the Yahwehist states. It also appears that many Judeans fled to Egypt and joined them during the many campaigns against Judea by Babylon.

However, this group saw themselves as part of the “Jewish” community and did much to maintain themselves over the centuries, and to establish contact with the other exiles in Babylon.

The second group (Jews in Exile in Babylonia) who accepted the reforms presented to them in Exile, adopted the life based on these reforms (therefore accepting their position as “new Jews,” but had no willingness to return to Judea, as offered by Cyrus.

However, this group for the most part also did not want to be “absorbed ” into the Babylonian culture.

- Actually this community remained intact until the late 20th century and was always a vital part of Judaism. However, for perhaps close to 1,000 years these Babylonians practiced a form of Judaism that was not completely the same as the “returnees.” These Jews in Babylon were more like “modern Jews” not controlled or fixated by a centralized temple (as did the Returnees) but practiced the Judaism of synagogues and rabbis.
- Over time, with the destruction of the second temple, and through the development of the Babylonian Talmud, there was a merging of the religions of those who remained in Babylon and those who returned and then lost the temple again, with the dominant factor being this group from Babylon. During most of the Middle Ages and beyond, critical questions concerning the religion were sent from thought the Jewish Diaspora to Babylon for answers.

Here again there is a modern parallel in that many Jews, once freed by the “Enlightenment” but prior to World War II, did not support the concepts of Zionism but wanted only to have religious freedom in the countries where they lived. So too, it seems, did the vast majority of the Jews in Babylon, who chose not to return to Judea.

The Third group (Returning Jews) came back to Judea with basically a new religion, mainly based on *Deuteronomy* (and *Numbers*), extremely anathema of idolatry and of human sacrifice; and putting great emphasis on individual responsibility and individual learning and practicing of the laws put forth in the key books.

- These people were, at least on paper, strong believers in a single god, devoid of consort, and this God was the controller of not just their fate, but the fate of all nations.
- However, unlike the ones who did not return, this group of Jews saw the need for the central temple and central worship of God through that temple. The returnees, while not rejecting the community structure of the Exiles, wanted the return of the old priest structure and the practice of the rituals of sacrifice.

And the fourth group: The remnants of the Jews left behind by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

- For the most part these “Jews”, who still supported Yahweh as the main god, were still “Jews” who worshiped Yahweh, but practiced much of the old culture that existed prior to the Exile. These Jews continued to practice the rites of the old religion that had dominated the region, and had been so denounced by the pre- and Exile prophets. These peoples were basically Ba’alist with a Yahweh veneer.

Again, the coming conflict between the third and fourth group would be of great importance in the development of the “next generations” of religions. And we see that this conflict is recorded in the Bible, and Josephus, the chroniclers of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (for the writings of Josephus on this see <http://www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/> or http://one-faith-of-god/new_testament/apocrypha/josephus_wars/josephus_wars_0000.htm)

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection D - Up Pops the Devil: - The Major Influence of Persian Religion on the Development on Judaism and Christianity

However, prior to going into the history of this new Jewish state and its coming conflicts, we have to look at another new element that was gaining hold in the area of religion during these days. This is the concept of a truly evil force, independent of and equal to God, or, as we soon come to call it, the devil. This was a relatively new idea in this time of the Jewish return from Exile, and it did not come from the Classical view or some older sky god religion, or Jewish traditions, but from a new religious concept created by the super power of its time, Persia.

And despite this establishment of the “holy state” in Judea with the Returnees and the protection of Cyrus, and the efforts to clearly base the new state on the “new Jewish” religion, based in the newly re-written holy books, the Jews were being greatly influenced by another far more successful “holy state”: the great protector and benefactor of the newly formed Jewish colony, Persia.

Again, as noted, Cyrus saw himself as a religion reformer as much as a conqueror. His religion was that of Zoroastrianism (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism>).

- What is critical for us to understand here, for this book, is that of the influence of Zoroastrianism on the development of what we know as the concept of the Devil. And from evaluation of the texts and the transition of Judaism, the influence was profound.

However, we can see, from what little we have, that the influence of this Persian concept on the Phoenicians was not as significant as it was on the Jews. The Phoenicians, while rocked by the local invasions and the rise of super powers, were still able to basically maintain their culture intact (and they were still attempting to be an absorber culture, rather than being absorbed). They, the Punic people, also had a great many outlets where their culture and religion had be placed and secured outside of the zone of war that was created by the 600 or so year period between the rise of Assyria and the coming of Alexander.

- As already noted, the Phoenicians were never completely subjugated to any of these invaders, and managed to develop “terms of occupation” that evolved into active partnerships with the series of hegemonic powers rather than complete domination. After all, the Phoenicians controlled the seas and were valued for their military and trading resources, including income from that trade.

As a reminder, the lands that were the kingdoms of Israel and Judah offered little in the way of value to the great powers prior to Persia, and actually in the long run, offered little in the way of active resistance to the total domination of the new super powers. While some Phoenicians cities were destroyed and others withstood long sieges, the Phoenicians were not led off into long periods of captivity and therefore did not need to do extensive “soul searching” as to why their gods had let them down.

This was not the case for the remnants of the state of Judah.

- Therefore, the Jews as a both physically (in Babylon), and “emotionally” defeated people in exile, were more likely to be influenced by the religions of the lands where

they lived, and the religion of the new force coming to power (the Persians): and Zoroastrianism was a new bent on the standard Aryan based Sky God view.

While all ancient religions had gods or forces that worked in conflict with the best beloved god, and that the religions had myths that portray these gods, or demons, as having destructive forces, these gods and demons were seen as just some of the many forces in the universe and were not more or less powerful than others. In addition, these good and bad gods were seen as co-dependent, linked to each other; often in the form of a trinity. One of the prime examples of this Ancient view is that of Vishnu, from one of the most ancient of all religions and one that seems to have gone through the least changes over the centuries, Hinduism.

- Vishnu as the All-Pervading essence of all beings, the master of and beyond the past, present and future, the creator and destroyer of all existences, one who supports, sustains and governs the Universe and originates and develops all elements within.
- In the [Trimurti](#), Vishnu is responsible for the maintenance or 'preservation' of the universe, with the other roles of [creation](#) and [destruction](#) being under the care of [Brahma](#) and [Shiva](#), respectively. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishnu>

But in Hinduism, the concept of the Destroyer is not a concept of "evil" per say.

- Shiva as Rudra is considered to be the destroyer of evil and sorrow. Shiva as Shankara is the doer of good. Shiva's consort is [Parvati](#), who is identified with [Devi](#), the Divine Mother, and with [Shakti](#) (divine energy). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiva>

In other ancient societies, there were forces of "evil" that were often multiple gods or demons that were not always associated with the "underworld." One of the most famous of these thousands of demons was Lilitu who eventually evolved into the demon known as Lilith. There are writing about her dating back at least 5,000 years and she was seen as the main cause of "wet dreams" of men. Initially:

- **Lilith** (Hebrew לילית) was a female [Mesopotamian](#) storm [demon](#) associated with wind and was thought to be a bearer of disease, illness, and death.
- Lilith's epithet was "the beautiful maiden". She was described as having no milk in her breasts and was unable to bear any children. Babylonian texts depict Lilith as the prostitute of the goddess [Ishtar](#). Similarly, and corresponding to Babylonian depictions, older Sumerian accounts state that Lilitu is called the handmaiden of [Inanna](#) or 'hand of Inanna'. The texts say that "*Inanna has sent the beautiful, unmarried, and seductive prostitute Lilitu out into the fields and streets in order to lead men astray*".
- Identical to the Babylo-Sumerian *Lilitu*, the [Akkadian](#) *Ardat-Lili* and the [Assyrian](#) *La-bar-tu* presided over [temple prostitution](#). Ardat is derived from "ardatu", a title of prostitutes and young unmarried women, meaning "[maiden](#)". Like Lilith, Ardat Lili was a figure of disease and uncleanness. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith>

Lilith had "partners" who were also focused on sex and young children. These included Alu and Gallu.

- Alu was originally an asexual demon, who took on female attributes, but later became a male demon. Alu liked to roam the streets like a stray dog at night and creep into

people's bedrooms as they slept to terrify them. ... He appears in Jewish lore as Ailo, here, he is used as one of Lilith's secret names.

- The other demon, Gallu of a group of demons with multiple dimensions Later, Gallu appears as Gello, Gylo, or Gyllou in Greco-Byzantine mythology as a child stealing and child killing demon. This figure was, likewise, adapted by the Jews as Gilu and was also considered a secret name of Lilith. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith>

Lilith is scarcely mentioned in the Bible, but grows to be a major influence in Jewish tradition during and after the Babylonian Captivity. Soon, new born Jewish infants have amulets to protect them from Lilith and boy's hair was not cut for three years to try and fool Lilith into believing that they are girls <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith>

She is frequently discussed in the Talmud and eventually in writings of the 9th Century AD evolved into "Adam's first wife" and the mother of all demons (with Adam as the father of all demons as well). (see the Alphabet of Ben Sira <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~humh/Topics/Lilith/>)

- The continuing presence of Lilith in Jewish tradition and how it translated itself into modern views are beyond the scope of this book. Please see <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~humh/Topics/Lilith/> for a more comprehensive view of how this tradition, of at least 5,000 years, continues to "morph" throughout the history of culture.

In addition, as discussed, in Ancient and Classical cultures, the agent of death was not always seen as a malevolent power. Nearly all cultures developed a concept of an afterlife, but many, including the initial urban peoples, as well as the later the Greek and Jewish viewed these places as one of a "shadowy existence"

- *Sheol* originated from the ancient Sumerian view that after one dies, no matter how benevolent or malevolent he or she was in life, in *Sheol* he or she is destined to eat dirt to survive. *Sheol* is sometimes compared to [Hades](#), the gloomy, twilight [afterlife](#) of [Greek mythology](#). The word "*hades*" was in fact substituted for "*sheol*" when the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek (see [Septuagint](#)). The [New Testament](#) (written in Greek) also uses "*hades*" to refer to the abode of the dead. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheol>

The traditional Jews never really changed their view on this place (Sheol) over time, nor does it appear to change for the Ancient Greeks;

And the Jews traditionally had no conception of the Devil as the "moderns" see him; in all of the Old Testament, with three exceptions, the Devil is not mentioned.

- In the [Book of Job](#), *ha-satan* ("the adversary") is a prosecuting attorney against mankind in the heavenly court of God. Other angels are not mentioned by name. He is known as the accuser and is the angel which questions mankind's loyalty to God. He argues that man is only loyal because God gives them prosperity. He is the one who actually delivers all the ills upon Job to test his faith on Gods command.
- In [1 Chronicles](#) 21:1, Satan incites [David](#) to commit the sin of taking a census of Israel. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>

- Zechariah 3:1,2 **1** And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary; And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

However, the second cite seems to have been greatly influenced by the Persian world view.

- Five hundred years earlier, this same story portrayed [Yahweh](#) as the one who incited David to take the census ([2 Samuel 24:1](#)). The later story was written after the Hebrews had been in [exile in Babylon](#) and likely had been exposed to [Zoroastrianism](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>

In addition based on the writings on Satan in the Jewish Encyclopedia Satan is not evil per say ... but is more like a lawyer (ok, no modern lawyer jokes allowed here.)

- In the prologue to the Book of Job, where Satan appears, together with other celestial beings or “sons of God,” before the Deity, ... characterize Satan as that member of the divine council who watches over human activity, but with the evil purpose of searching out men’s sins and appearing as their accuser. He is, therefore, the celestial prosecutor, [lawyer](#) who sees only iniquity;
- Yet it is also evident from the prologue that Satan has no power of independent action, but requires the permission of God, which he may not transgress. He cannot be regarded, therefore, as an opponent of the Deity; and the doctrine of monotheism is disturbed by his existence no more than by the presence of other beings before the face of God. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>

Even today, Jews do not have a concept of a hell, or a place of punishment as do the Christians faiths.

- Though the belief in demons was greatly encouraged and enlarged in [Babylonia](#) under the influence of the [Zoroastrianism](#) that was the religion of the [Persian Empire \(Parsee\)](#) notions. Demonology never became an essential feature of Jewish theology. The reality of demons was never questioned by the [Talmudists](#) and late rabbis; most accepted their existence as a fact. Nor did most of the medieval thinkers question their reality. Only rationalists like [Maimonides](#) and [Abraham ibn Ezra](#), clearly denied their existence. Their point of view eventually became the mainstream Jewish understanding. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demon>

Jews in their early times, and then again in their many exiles, did adopt some of the concepts of “evil” that were more in line with the Ancients' concepts of multiple forces that brought problems to humans

- [Rabbinical](#) demonology has three classes of, demons, though they are scarcely separable one from another. There were the *shedim*, the *mazziqim* (“harmers”), and the *ruqin* (“evil spirits”). Besides these there were *lilin* (“night spirits”), *elane* (“shade”, or “evening spirits”), *iharire* (“midday spirits”), and *afrire* (“morning spirits”), as well as the “demons that bring famine” and “such as cause storm and earthquake” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demon>

- There is no evidence in [Torah](#), or in the books of the [Prophets](#) and other writings, to suggest that God created one being as the source of [evil](#). The Hebrew word used for evil is usually translated as ‘calamity’, ‘disaster’ or ‘chaos’.
 - In fact, the [Book of Isaiah](#), Job, [Ecclesiastes](#), and [Deuteronomy](#) all have passages in which God is credited for creating both the good and the evil of this world. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Devil

The reason for this lack of a created devil or evil one in the Old Testament is that the failures of Israel and Judah are not linked to some major oppositional force, but directly to the people of Israel and Judah. It was the failure of people to listen to the rules of God and to live by the rules of God that led to all the “evils” that befell the “chosen people”.

In fact (as far as we accept the Bible as fact), we read that the practice of human sacrifice, among the Israelites and Judeans was a direct result of God’s tactics:

- Ezekiel 20:25 “Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord.”

In none of the Jewish text (with the sole exception of Job), is the role of the Devil defined as the tempter of man or the rival of god for the souls of the human race.

- The issues between humans and Yahweh were personal, and direct. It was the worshiping of other gods, sacrificing wrongly to Yahweh, the failure to maintain the rules of Deuteronomy (and Exodus and Numbers) that was wrong, and it was the responsibilities of the peoples for “whoring after other gods” and “passing the children through fire.” Up until this point in history, “The Devil made me do it” was not a known concept.

However, in Zoroastrianism we get religion which has in its core beliefs a real power that is the equal of God, who is “evil” incarnate. In Zoroastrianism we see many of the components of what would become the main religions of the West (including a “trinity of god”). Also, the influence of this Persian religion on the third and fourth types of Judaism, (the returnees and the remnants) helped to bring into place the profoundly impacting concept of a wholly evil force.

In Zoroastrianism the name of the Good God is Ahura Mazda, and the Zoroastrians refer to themselves as *Mazdayasna*, or the worshipers of Mazda.

- In Zoroastrianism, where the battle between good and evil is a distinguishing characteristic of the religion (see also [asha and druj](#)), the *ahuras* are wholly benevolent, and the *daevas* are wholly malevolent. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura>
- In the Zoroastrian credo summarized in [Yasna](#) 12.1, the adherent declares: “I profess myself a Mazda worshiper, a follower of the teachings of Zoroaster, rejecting the *daevas*, ... “ This effectively defines *ahura* by defining what *ahura* is not. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura>

(Do you renounce Satan? – seems to evolve out of this pledge which developed some 600 years before the supposed time of Christ).

Over the course of time, the concept of the daevas evolved into all things that are evil, the thing to be opposed. The very nature and appearance of the demon took shape in Persian culture.

- A **div** is usually pictured as a being with combined human and animal characteristics; they have two arms and legs like a human, but they may be dark blue, bright red, chalk-white or spotted; they are often hairy, and have a tufted tail like a lion; their faces are bestial, with sharp fangs, horns, and animal-like snouts, or in some cases the beak of a bird; for feet they might have clawed talons or hooves (though ordinary feet are more common); and though they are fond of gold ornaments, they wear very little in the way of clothing, and often display enormous **genitalia**.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daeva>

This description sounds almost straight out of Revelations, but, again, it predates that book by at least 600 years.

We can also see in many of the writings and teachings of Zoroastrianism the foundations of much of modern western religion. In the core writings of the religion, we see God as the creator of all things, some of the text seems to come close to saying “in the beginning there was the word”.

Central to Zoroaster’s perception of Ahura Mazda is the concept of **asha** (Vedic *ṛta*), literally “truth”, and in the extended sense, the equitable law of the universe,) ... All physical creation (*geti*) was thus a product of - and ran according to - a master plan, inherent to Ahura Mazda, and violations of the order (**druj**) were violations against creation, and thus violations against Ahura Mazda.

- This concept of *asha* versus the *druj* should not be confused with the good-versus-evil battle evident in western religions, for although both forms of opposition express moral conflict, the *asha* versus *druj* concept is more subtle.

In Zoroaster’s perception of Ahura Mazda’s role as the one uncreated Creator of all (**Yasna** 44.7), the Creator is then *not* also the creator of ‘druj’, for as anti-creation, the *druj* are not created (or not creatable, and thus - like Ahura Mazda - uncreated).

We also see in this religion the concept of God being only God, and all things that God does are good.

“All” is therefore the “supreme benevolent providence” (**Yasna** 43.11), and Ahura Mazda as the benevolent Creator of all is consequently the Creator of only the good (**Yasna** 31.4).

- In Zoroaster’s revelation, Ahura Mazda will ultimately triumph (**Yasna** 48.1), but cannot (or will not) control the *druj* in the here and now. As such, Zoroaster did not perceive Ahura Mazda to be omnipotent.

In addition, we see that good acts are needed to maintain the stability of the world (and to

obtain salvation) and that mankind has free will.

Throughout the [Gathas](#) Zoroaster emphasizes deeds and actions, for it is only through “good thoughts, good words, good deeds” that order can be maintained, and in Zoroaster’s revelation indeed *the* purpose of mankind is to assist in maintaining the order.

In *Yasna* 45.9, Ahura Mazda “has left to men’s wills” to choose between doing good (that is, good thoughts, good words and good deeds) and doing evil (bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds). This concept of a free will is perhaps Zoroaster’s greatest contribution to religious philosophy. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura_Mazda

Augustine and many others of the “early Church” were well versed in Zoroastrianism, and its teachings; the influence on free will and good deeds, on those Church writers seems clear.

However, Zoroastrianism (as it seems with all religions) was split, or at least divided into two main sects. The primary one, the one seemingly supported by Cyrus, did not see the world as simply the dualistic view of good versus evil, as is mainly portrayed. This sect was far more complex and held a more nuanced view.

However in the other main branch of Zoroastrianism, Zurvanism, we see a stronger view of who was the “evil one.” For in this conception of the religion there are twin divinities:

In [Zurvanism](#), which developed as a cult within the greater Zoroastrian church, Ahura Mazda was not the transcendental God, but one of two equal-but-opposite divinities under the supremacy of *Zurvan*, ‘Time’. This belief, which from a Mazdaen point of view, is an apostasy, rests on an interpretation of *Yasna* 30.3, that makes Ahura Mazda and [Angra Mainyu](#) twin brothers that had co-existed for all Time. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura_Mazda

- The Malevolent Spirit (lit: [Angra Mainyu](#)) and the Benevolent Spirit (*Spenta Mainyu*, identified with [Ahura Mazda](#)) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zurvanism>

The history of this sect is much less clear than of Zoroastrianism, in general. This is mainly due to the fact the cult more or less ended (or more aptly, was destroyed) in the tenth century AD. It did, however, have great influence in between the third and fourth century AD, which we will refer to later. It appears also to have been clearly around and influential during the time of the Exile (500’s BC), and is referred to by Greek writers some 100 years after the return of the Exiles (300-400 BC). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zurvanism>

Therefore, the concept of dueling, competing forces of God and Evil, was present in Jewish thought during the time of the Exile and during the return, but while it began to have influence, the idea of the “Devil” did not take hold of the mainstream of thought. The Jews were too focused on the development of the colony and maintaining the 613 commandments to become too engaged in this new idea of an absolute evil force. Besides they also saw that all good and bad things flowed from one source and one source only, their Yahweh.

However, as we will see, the idea of the Devil, or Evil did begin to gain a greater foothold as more great disasters came upon the Jewish people. For the Jews who did discuss this concept, and began to think and write about this idea, Zurvanism appears to be the main

influence. However, these people wanted and needed to justify this new concept of a rival evil in the writings of the Jews; they needed to connect this concept to Jewish writings and traditions. They found a logical candidate in Satan, the accuser of mankind.

- Satan is to be better understood as an “accuser” or “[adversary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan)”. The term is applied both to supernatural entities and human beings. The term Satan in Hebrew is derived from the root meaning “to oppose”, “to be an adversary” or “to act as an adversary”.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan>

It must be remembered that this concept of the Devil, this great evil one, was not really part of the Jewish tradition, though it gained some support among some Jews, under Persian influence. But this support was mainly restricted to smaller sects of Judaism, and only gained some mass appeal among the broad base of the Jewish people, during the many disasters that befell the Jewish people during the 750 years after the return of the exiles.

- And despite these and many future disasters, the Jewish religion still sees God as the source of both good and bad events.

However, this belief of God being the source of both good and evil was not a hallmark of the early Christians. From their earliest writings, they clearly accepted the concept of the Devil and saw his “work” everywhere. While the Jews had a long internal struggle on the issue of the Devil, most Jews never developed the concept of the Great Evil one. The early Christians, on the other hand, showed no such reluctance.

- In the earliest of the writings of the Christians we see that they have a well established view of the Devil being real, and, that demons are everywhere, plaguing and tempting humans (including Christ).

In fact, this acceptance of the Devil is one of the two key items that separated Judaism from Christianity (the other being the concept of sacrificing of a “son of God”)

This rise of the “Devil” is quite a transition in popular thought; in some 500 years, from where the ideas of the Evil One are first introduced into Western thought by the Persians, to the subsequent acceptance by some Jews, and finally to the conclusive point where the Christians have this fully accepted model of Satan.

- In fact, when compared with other religions and teaching of the time, this transformation of the role of the Devil, accepted and presented by the Christians is almost unique, closely resembling only the repressed sect of Zoroastrianism, Zurvanism.

The early Christians, unlike most peoples (other than the Zurvanists), saw the world dominated by Satan and demons. Christians claimed that the Gods of the Ancients (Zeus, etc) really did exist, but they claimed that the “old gods” were, in fact, not gods, but all demons (and since there were so many “gods”, there were many demons).

They also saw all the religions, other than the “true” belief in Christ, as a trick of the Devil, developed near the beginning of time, by the Devil, to try and keep the people away from the true savior and true religion. (Here, “the Devil made me do it” starts to become a legitimate defense.)

- Any similarities between Christianity and “death and rising gods,” any ancient mystery cults, any Earth Mother Goddess concepts, or any other element of any “pagan”

religion. was claimed, by the early Christians, to be based in the work of the Devil to confuse people away from recognition of the true savior (and officially that is still the position of the Roman Catholic Church).

- The devil knew Christ was coming and when he was coming, so he laid the foundation for rejecting Christ by making so many other religions similar to the Christ story.

But the early Christians still were linked into the Jewish world, so they also look for a role model for what this Satan looked like from that Jewish frame work, and evidence of his very existence in the history of the Jewish people. And, here in the Old Testament, the early Christians found what they needed; not (the infrequently mentioned) Satan per say (although they did use the name,) but that old long term rival of God; Ba'al.

The eventual adoption of an image of the "Devil" that was so similar to the image of "Ba'al" was, in part, linked to the early Christians' Jewish traditions, but was also, perhaps, a product of the time frame involved;

- During the early development of Christianity there was still very positive feelings about the Greek gods by most of the educated elite of the Classical world. It was bad enough to say that the "old gods" were demons, but to portray the Devil as Zeus another matter entirely. Clearly, there was a need for another role model for the Devil, for the "evil one." So, being linked to the Jewish world, the Christians looked more to Ba'al and his manifestations, than they did to the still popular Zeus.

The transformation of Ba'al from the "good god" of the Phoenicians to the new "Evil One", was part of the general transformation of the Classical world, and Classical world gods, that came about with the rise of Christianity. Eventually all the Classical and Ancient world came to be seen as the work of the Devil (and very much in line with the Zurvan world view) and therefore evil, and something to be completely rejected. (This transformation also fits into one of the four concepts of addressing change, "morphing.")

Some of the evidence for making Ba'al the image of the Devil is rather overt.

- Some of the names for the Devil (Beelzebub, Son of the Morning) found in the early Christian Biblical writings are based on the names of the Phoenicians concepts of the "good god" Ba'al.
- In addition, the image of "Hell" of souls burning appears to be based on the images of the sacrifice to Ba'al conducted for thousands of years in the region where Christianity arose.

However, by adopting Ba'al as the role model for the Devil, the Christians also set up the "future world", our world of today, based in the Bible's history. The Christians of today actually see the world very much as the Ancient Hebrew Prophets did;

- Yahweh and Ba'al are still locked in combat over the hearts and minds people's of the world.

We will soon also need to consider how the long-term resistance to the development of Christianity in Europe was manifested by the supposed Devil worship presented by witches. "Witchcraft" and other forms of resistance to Christian orthodoxy may have actually represented the continued worship of Ba'al.

However, that form of modern Ba'al worship is only secondary to this book's intent; it is more focused on how Christianity also continued to worship Ba'al in a morphed process. We will

also attempt to link the development of this morphing process to the political history of the time.

Therefore, we need to return to the story line, since now another great influence is about to descend on the Middle East, Greece and Hellenism. This arrival brought about a new major political and religious crisis for the newly developed “Jewish state” that came about through the contributions of Cyrus.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection E - The Foundation of the Second Jewish Commonwealth

With the sudden rise of Cyrus and the sudden fall of Babylon, the Persian influence on Jewish thought takes on two dimensions; the way home, and the influence of the religion of the Persians.

It was not an easy choice for many, to leave the comfort of Babylon or to go to a ruined land that almost none among them had ever seen. In fact, many of the Jews decided not to return after some seventy years of exile.

- Few Jews in the US actually decided to go to Israel in the 1940's and 50's, during the time of its creation. The comfort and security of the United States was too alluring. In addition, Zionism was not an accepted philosophy among many Jews in the 1950's. Even with the events of World War II, many did not see the establishment of a "Jewish" state as the solution to the "Jewish Question." The Jews of the United States did not think themselves less of a Jew for not immigrating to the new country, nor did the Jews of Babylon think themselves less observant of their religion (or the term used in those days) by remaining in the great city.

According to the Bible, the first wave came under Sheshbazzar, a surviving Davidic princeling appointed governor by Cyrus, and Zerubbabel who arrived with a group of some 50,000 persons. .

- So, 49,897 Jews came with Zerubbabel from Babylon to Jerusalem in 536 BC, 70 years after the captivity, as prophesied by Jeremiah 29:10 (in the year 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar brought the first group of Israelites captives to Babylon, in the year 586 BC the third and last group was deported. Governor Zerubbabel was a grandson of Jehoiachin, one of the last Davidic kings of Judah.
<http://biblia.com/jesusbible/ezra.htm#Zerubbabel>

We really do not know what percent of the Judean population this 49,897 represented. But it most likely was far less than 10%, and possibly as little as 5%.

- Seventy years later, when the Babylonians fell to the Persians and the Jews were permitted to return; only a small number did. Of, what was probably a million Jews living in the Persian Empire, only 42,000 went back, meaning that 95% stayed in Babylon under Persia domination.
http://www.aish.com/literacy/jewishhistory/Crash_Course_in_Jewish_History_Part_43_-_The_Jews_of_Babylon.asp

The second and much smaller wave (2,000) came some twenty years later with Ezra. And the third wave came under Nehemiah, the new governor. The number is never specified in the Bible.

The overall story is filled with contradictions. For example:

- Ezra reports that the walls of Jerusalem are fully built, and later Nehemiah reports not only that the walls not built but that his story as leader concerns building the walls of the city.
- In addition, Ezra supposedly deals successfully with the practice of taking “foreign wives” (a major no no, but readily practiced) and yet Nehemiah also has to deal with the same issues just some fifteen years later.

Here is a sequence of the return determined from Biblical sources:

Sheshbazzar

- First to return as a Persian appointee
- His official status as “governor” is difficult to define - he probably had semi-independent control of affairs in Judah
- Began work on rebuilding the Temple immediately, but never completed the work
- No one knows his fate - he may have died in Judah of old age or, more probably, been recalled to Persia

Zerubbabel and Joshua

- Time of their arrival and work is difficult to establish.
- Completed work on the Temple at the instigation of Haggai and Zechariah, despite opposition from their neighbors.
- During their period of leadership, Persia experienced a crisis in leadership and talk of the collapse of the Persian Empire was rampant - this probably fueled opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple.

Ezra and Nehemiah

- Chronology of Ezra and Nehemiah show the colony is notoriously difficult to establish and govern.
- In general, they were able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and thus make the city defensible again and to purify the worship of God according to the Torah
<http://religion.ucumberlands.edu/hebrewbible/hbnotes/exlnotes.htm>

The story of the “way home” and the efforts involved in building the new temple is portrayed in the books of Ezra and in good Bible tradition, again in Nehemiah. In these texts we get extensive details on who made the “Alelah” or the “going up” (as used in modern Judaism to refer to the return to Israel). But, we also see the conflict between the Old Judea (the group four of my explanation) and the New Judea, (the group three) where in Chapter 4 of Ezra we read the story of those who remained taking steps to stop the building of the temple. They are rejected by the New Judeans.

Ezra 4:

1. Now the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a Temple for the Lord God of Israel.
2. And they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses and said to them, “Let us build with you, for like you we seek your God, and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon, the king of Assyria, who brought us

up here.”

3. And Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, “It is not for you and for us to build a House for our God, but we ourselves shall build for the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”
4. And the people of the land were hindering the people of Judea and frightening them from building.

(And reading this we see that it is not just the remnants of the old Jews who are on the land, but the descendants of the peoples brought in by the Assyrians, who had adopted Yahweh as their God.)

This conflict led to the delay of many years in the completion of the new temple, and we read in the next few chapters of Ezra, the politics needed to gain permission from the successor of Cyrus, Darius, to continue the building of the temple.

In Chapter Six we see that the rituals of the new Jews, even with the reforms of the Exile seem not that dissimilar to the rituals of other peoples (but without the idols and human sacrifice)

15. And the completion of this House was on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.
16. And the Children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the members of the exile, performed the dedication of this House of God with joy.
17. And they offered up for the dedication of this House of God a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and twelve he-goats for sin-offerings for all Israel, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

We also read in Ezra that the new Judeans return almost to the days of the Judges, where it becomes a self-governing province in the Persian Empire, governed by Ezra as the chief judge of the land, with total and absolute power to enforce the new Judaism.

21. And from me-I, King Artaxerxes is issued forth an edict to all the treasurers who are on the other side of the river, that whatever Ezra, the priest, the scholar of the Law of the God of heaven, requests of you shall be done quickly.

25. And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God, which is in your hand, appoint judges and magistrates who will judge all the people beyond the river, all who know the laws of your God, and whoever does not know, you shall teach them.

26. And whoever does not fulfill the law of your God and the law of the king promptly-judgment shall be inflicted upon him; whether to be executed, uprooted, fined, or tortured.”

Although he attempted to govern with a strong hand, and to impose the new Judaism on the returnees, things just didn't work and a crisis developed.

Ezra 9:

1. And when these were completed, the chiefs approached me, saying “The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites were not separated from the peoples of the lands, like the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.
2. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, and the holy

seed has become mingled with the peoples of the lands, and the hand of the chiefs and the deputies was first in this treachery.”

With great pains and difficulty Ezra enforced his edicts concerning “mixed marriages” and imposed a tenuous control of the new colony of new Jews.

However, over time, according to Ezra, under Persian protection the colony prospered and spread out taking over much of the lands near Jerusalem and North. But then again we read that the ability to make the people comply to the laws of the new Jewish faith was not easy and the next major governor, Nehemiah, was faced with similar misdeeds among the “returnees”

Nehemiah 13:

7. And I came to Jerusalem, and I pondered the evil that Eliashib had done in the matter of Tobiah, by making him a chamber in the courts of the Temple of God.
8. And I was very distressed, and I cast all the vessels of Tobiah’s house out of the chamber.
11. So I quarreled with the prefects, and I said, “Why has the Temple of God been forsaken?” And I gathered them and stationed them in their place.
15. In those days, I saw in Judea [people] treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing stacks [of grain] and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, and figs, and all types of loads and bringing them to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, and I warned them on the day they sold provisions.
16. And the Tyrians (Phoenicians) [who] sojourned there were bringing fish and all [types of] merchandise and selling on the Sabbath to the people of Judea and in Jerusalem.
17. And I quarreled with the dignitaries of Judea, and I said to them, “What is this bad thing that you are doing-profaning the Sabbath day?”
18. Did not your ancestors do this, and our God brought upon us all this calamity, and upon this city, and you are increasing the wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath?”
19. Now it came to pass when the gates of Jerusalem cast shadows before the Sabbath, that I commanded, and the doors were closed, and I said that they should not open them until after the Sabbath, and I stationed some of my youths over the gates so that no load should enter on the Sabbath day.
23. Also in those days, I saw the Jews who had married Ashdodite, Ammonite, and Moabite women.
24. And half their children were speaking Ashdodite, and they did not know how to speak Hebrew, and [so it was] with the language of every people.
25. And I quarreled with them, and I cursed them, and I struck some of them, and I plucked out their hair, and I adjured them by God, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters either for your sons or for yourselves.
30. But I purified them of everything alien, and I appointed watches of the priests and of the Levites, each one in his work.
31. And concerning the wood offering at appointed times and concerning the first-fruits, remember for me, my God, favorably.

Despite the constant struggles within the community of returnees, the power of the “judges” appointed by the Persians, prevailed to a great degree, and the next phase of Judea began;

an “absolutist” religious oligarchy controlled jointly by the governor and the temple. This became a society where strict obedience to the “laws of God” was required and capital punishment became the norm for failure to comply.

- The concept was also developed in this community, that the requirement of the individual’s conformity is required for the survival of the “state.” Also, during this time, the size and role of the temple staff increased greatly, and their control over the culture increased during the next two hundred years of Persian rule

Again, the connection was made between the failure to conform to the religion and the prospect of doom. As state in verse 18

- 18.** Did not your ancestors do this, and our God brought upon us all this calamity, and upon this city, and you are increasing the wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath?”

This new mini religious state of perhaps only 75,000 persons, during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, laid the foundation for what Flavius Josephus would refer to as the “Second Jewish Commonwealth”.

But also remember, this was not the only Jewish community, we still have at this time the Babylonian, Egyptian (and other areas) and the “Canaanite” Jews (descendants of those left behind by the Babylonians and Assyrians, as well as the “converts” to Yahweh among the peoples settled in the area by the Assyrians).

This division among the Jews in this time frame was not exactly the “Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed” Jews of today. There were similarities however, as these communities actually were making efforts to maintain the older style of the religion, but with different interpretations of what that maintenance should look like.

- Those remaining in Babylon were more focused on the “rabbinic” format, with less focus on the Temple and priest
- Those in the new “colony” of Jerusalem were trying to recreate the old order prior to the exile, with the temple and priest as the core of the religion, but without the “wrong” sacrifices that enraged God. The strict adherence to the 613 commandments, and strongly “absolutist” outlook were of paramount importance.
- The Egyptian Jews, who seemed more “cosmopolitan” in their outlook, supported their temple (and the idea of more than one temple for God) and engaged in correspondence with Jerusalem and Babylon.
- The “remnants” who feel they are the true followers of Yahweh, but are rejected by the new Colony, seem to maintain the traditions of multiple gods and worship that still may include child sacrifice.

In summary, the Jews of Egypt maintained a second temple, despite the statements in the Bible that there should only be one temple. In addition, the Babylonian Jews, not wanting to establish a second temple, developed and maintained the approach of organization around the synagogues. Finally, the “Canaanite” Jews were still in conflict over what types of sacrificing should be required at the Temples and elsewhere.

The rewrites of the Old Testament that took place in Babylonia were not accepted by the Canaanite Jews, nor were they accepted by the Egyptian Jews, for the most part. Division on

interpretation and rituals continued.

- However, for the first time in Jewish history, thanks to the rule of Ezra and Nehemiah, the “Prophets” or at least the rules based on the projections and demands of the prophets, were enforced in the state of Judah.

The returnees (under Ezra and Nehemiah), under the protection of the Persian King Cyrus and later kings (acting under God’s will), are in their time, like Brigham Young trying to find a new land to practice the newly, “better” understood and “more” revealed religion. Perhaps another correlation is the Pilgrims coming to America looking for a new place to practice what they saw was a pure form of Christianity.

“What was past was prologue” to these returning people and their leaders. They were returning from exile with what they saw as a new understanding of what was needed to have God’s love and support. They were dedicated to the creation of a new society based on that new understanding.

- And it clearly did not include any of the practices of the Phoenician religions that had infected the Israelis/Jews for hundreds if not thousand of years.

Sacrificing of animals and foods were still acceptable (as in almost all ancient religions). Sacrificing of children, the “passing through fire”, one of the chief rituals of the Phoenicians, and the half/Yahwehist and half/Ba’alist of the old kingdoms, was one of the root causes of God’s anger and, within this new state, the Prophets took steps to see that it was not conducted.

However, the world (the Promised Land) that the “returnees” entered under the protection and influence of the Persians was a different world from the one they left after the Babylonian conquest.

- The land and the people left on the land had clearly not recovered from the devastation of the Babylonian conquest.
- The long term rivals, Canaanites/Phoenicians, were not gone (except for maybe the ten lost tribes?) but were greatly humbled and almost powerless as a result of the harsh Assyrian and Babylonian rule.

The new Persian overlords were attempting to revive the land, which in part is why they supported the returning of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple. But seventy years of exile created a great deal conflict over “land claims.”

- The remnant populations did not accept the claims associated with the “right of return” of these exiles (as modern Israel does not accept the land claims of the Palestinians of today).

There was resistance to the “new Jews” returning to ruins of Jerusalem, not only due to land issues, but over the fact that they returned with a religion that was markedly different and viewed with some skepticism by the descendants of those Jews not taken into exile. This skepticism was also shared by the remaining Canaanites, and those who had been settled on the land by the Assyrians (and who had adopted Yahweh worship of some form).

But for the time being, during the return, the world looked stable. The Persians with their support of religious freedom, and stated support of all religions, and their great and powerful rule, looked to be the protector that the new Jewish state needed. The issues of keeping Yahweh happy (by among other things keeping the Jewish men from lusting after those

Canaanite woman) seemed to dominate the small settlements. This Persian umbrella gave the new colony time to take root and grow, and in fact, prosper.

- And after all, God had promised that if all things went according to the 613 commandments, never again would he break the covenant with his people. For the returnees, the future looked bright and unshakable, at least for the true believers.

The Persian protection enabled the new colony to become established, and to begin to somewhat flourish, although that is a relative term. The Jewish “state” still remained small, isolated from major political events of the day, and very xenophobic; a minor province in an isolated area of a mighty empire.

Yet the rule of Persia was to prove only slightly less ephemeral than the power of Babylonia. A great change was about to occur.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection F - The Impact of Alexander and his Inheritors on Religion and Culture

As we saw earlier when retelling the story of Phoenicia, the “Greeks” under Alexander stormed into Asia and, despite all odds, repeatedly beat the armies of the Persian Empire taking over the lands stretching out as far as India.

We can not really be, in this work, concerned with the amazing development of Greek culture after the almost “divine” defense and eventual defeat of the Persian invasions. But here is just a brief time line to remind us of some of the key points in there world history changing events:

500–400 B.C.

Greeks defeat Persians: battles of Marathon (490 B.C.), Thermopylae (480 B.C.), Salamis (480 B.C.). Peloponnesian Wars between Athens and Sparta (431–404 B.C.)—Sparta victorious. Pericles comes to power in Athens (462 B.C.). Flowering of Greek culture during the Age of Pericles (450–400 B.C.). The Parthenon is built in Athens as a temple of the goddess Athena (447–432 B.C.). Ictinus and Callicrates are the architects and Phidias is responsible for the sculpture. Sophocles, Greek dramatist (496?–406 B.C.). Hippocrates, Greek “Father of Medicine” (born 460 B.C.). Xerxes I, king of Persia (rules 485–465 B.C.).

400–300 B.C.

Pentateuch—first five books of the Old Testament evolve in final form. Philip of Macedon, who believed himself to be a descendant of the Greek people, assassinated (336 B.C.) after subduing the Greek city-states; succeeded by son, Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), who destroys Thebes (335 B.C.), conquers Tyre and Jerusalem (332 B.C.), occupies Babylon (330 B.C.), invades India, and dies in Babylon. His empire is divided among his generals; one of them, Seleucis I, establishes Middle East empire with capitals at Antioch (Syria) and Seleucia (in Iraq). Trial and execution of Greek philosopher Socrates (399 B.C.). Dialogues recorded by his student, Plato (c. 427–348 or 347 B.C.). Euclid’s work on geometry (323 B.C.). Aristotle, Greek philosopher (384–322 B.C.). Demosthenes, Greek orator (384–322 B.C.). Praxiteles, Greek sculptor (400–330 B.C.).

So in roughly 175 years, the Greeks went from being a few small and relatively unimportant city states on the edges of the world's great powers, to becoming not only the rulers of the former great power, but also the major “absorber” culture of the time. The Greek way, Hellenism, became the most admired and imitated in the world (of the Near East, and Central Asia).

The closest we can compare this to in the West is Spain which went from being a weak and divided country to one which ruled the largest empire ever known at that time. They accomplished this in a mere 100 years (1450 – 1550). There is also the case of England, which, in some 175 years, went from being a small isolated kingdom in constant fear of conquest, to become a super power, after emerging from civil war. England managed to beat all its competitors, with a culture that was mimicked throughout the world (1650-1825). Unlike the Greeks the British managed to maintain, and expand their empire for another 125 years.

However, the timeline we really need to review, the period after Alexander, shows the impact

of this the rapid success of the Greeks followed by a period of cultural interchange and eventual Roman domination.

- 325 – 150 BC Hellenistic conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean and cultural domination of area. Phoenicia suffers great defeats and loses trading control to Greeks; Phoenicia puts far greater efforts in Western Mediterranean, including Spain.
 - “Classical world view” (Hellenism) mostly replaces “Ancient world”
 - Phoenicia loses in wars with Alexander and also in the Punic Wars with Rome, Carthage destroyed, Phoenicia “Hellenized” Spain and other areas of Phoenician influence occupied by Rome.
 - 140 BC – 140 AD Jewish war of resistance against Classical domination
 - 135 – 65 BC Judea rebels against Greeks successor kings, unifies around religious issues, creates brief independent state (Second Jewish Commonwealth) under strong “orthodox religious” efforts ... force converts peoples of the area (including Galilee and southern Phoenicia to “orthodox Judaism” Offers alternative to Ancients and Hellenization
 - (65 BC – 65 AD Jewish state under Roman control, with relative hands off policy concerning religion, Jews often prosper under Roman rule, but resent direct rule.
 - 66 AD – 135 AD Rome crushes a series of three major and a number of minor Jewish revolts, destroys Judea, the second temple,) and nearly exterminates the Jews in much of the Eastern Mediterranean world, (large Jewish presence in Egypt repressed, only other large Jewish community in Babylonia survives almost untouched by Roman efforts) Eliminates the Jewish alternative to the Classical world view.

In this clash of cultures we again see the four responses playing out (the accepters, rejecters, the mergers and the morphers)

Like the policies of the Persians, the religions of the newly subjugated peoples were mostly overtly tolerated by these new Greek overlords. However, unlike the Persians, to become part of the new Greek “social order”, the new power elite, it was necessary for the “local peoples” to adopt the Greek life styles. Many of the ruling elite of the conquered peoples of Alexander did, in fact, try to “go Greek” to maintain their old status as the local power elite, as much as possible (the accepters).

- This was a similar situation to that of the Jews of Europe during the Enlightenment (18th and 19th Centuries). While Jews were finally officially “tolerated” as Jews, the real “ticket to the good life” still required conversion to Christianity. The temptations and rewards of the new culture were too much for many persons (including, for example, the grandfather of John Kerry) and these Jews gave up their ancestral religion for “acceptance and status.” It was conversion to Hellenism by temptation, not by force (a model used extensively later in the Muslim world.)

Much of the surviving Phoenician elite of the time made the same choice as many Jews in 19th Century Europe and “converted” by accepting the “Greek way.” They were not alone, as most elites of the new Alexandrian Empire, from Anatolia to India, did much the same, including many of those in Judea. The adoption was called Hellenization or the development of the “Hellenistic world.”

- So the great absorbing cultures of the Ancient world, for the most part, failed to absorb the Greeks, (completely); and as part of the process, new hybrid cultures soon developed. For example, the Greeks adopted the Egyptian titles of rule, and form of rule, however, they still created a great new Hellenistic culture within Egypt. Alexandria of Egypt became perhaps the greatest “Greek” city of all time.

The Emperor Alexander was more tolerant of the older cultures than most of his fellow Greeks, and attempted to quickly merge the Greek and Ancient cultures. Alexander staged a mass wedding of 10,000 Greeks with 10,000 women of the conquered lands to symbolize his desire to blend cultures and ideas.

After his death, almost all the soldiers dumped their new wives, as a show of the Greek belief in their superiority, and the Hellenization, at least for a while, became more of a required acceptance of Greek ways rather than a blending of “east and west.” However, despite the Greek chauvinism, under the successor kings, this cultural blending took place quite a bit. So, along with Hellenization or Greek cultural dominance, there was also “blending” of cultures, beliefs, and religions throughout the areas dominated by the inheritors of the Alexandrian conquests (the mergers).

- This blending created a whole new outlook in both the East and the West, concerning both “the worlds of the living” and “the world of the dead”.

Often, the Greeks and the “locals” “cultural myths” were merged into very interesting composites. One example of this blending is the merging of Buddhism and Greek culture in what was called the “Indo-Greek kingdoms” (that dominated what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan for about 200 years 180 BC – 10 AD.) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Greek_kingdom.

Besides the blending, Hellenism also led to something that could best be called an ancient version of “new-speak.” (reference to George Orwell’s *1984*) In the conquered areas, Greek terms were used to replace the older local terms, but the Greek terms were given new (or old) meanings by the older cultures (the morphers)

- This led to many “new religions” rising in the area, which were, in fact, often the old religions of the areas under new “Greek” guises, using Greek terms to express old traditional concepts.

Besides the shock waves in the Ancient world created by the upstart Alexander’s victory, a new state of political flux emerged, which, to this day, has yet to achieve anything like a state of long term resolution. Change has been the one constant. This cross cultural conflict, this merging of cultures and ideas, created an even greater crisis in the world’s religions.

The break down of “cultural borders” between the Greeks and Eastern worlds led to great influences on both worlds that also have not been resolved.

- The blending of these various religions and the use of new terms to explain old ideas is critical to the understanding of the premise of this book. It is the basis of why we don’t always have the trail into Christianity of “Ba’alism” by name, but we do have it by “concept”. We don’t see the transition of the Devil from Ba’al directly, but indirectly.

However, not everyone in the older, conquered cultures were active participants in Hellenization; nor were they willing to compromise their beliefs by religious blending or by

“masking” their beliefs with new Greek terms. In fact, many of the urban and rural poor, with less to gain from Greek adoption, tried to maintain the “old time religions,” and linked their maintenance of the old beliefs to anti-Greek (and later, anti-Roman) political efforts (the resisters).

This religious maintenance took on many forms of resistance, some groups and individuals were “passive” and personal in their efforts (moving into desert communities, or isolating themselves in some other fashion, hoping for God’s intervention) and some groups took on a very active, aggressive approach to both religion and resistance.

- We have solid history tracking the Jewish internal conflicts, which developed into several groups that offered some form of resistance to Rome, including the passive Essenes and the aggressive Zealots. In addition, we know of the successful “aggressive” resistance of the Jews against latter Greek rulers (the Maccabeus or Hasmonean Wars 167-164 BC)

The passive approaches of resistance also included some “religious blending” mentioned, especially adding some of the elements of the Persian religion. This passive approach led to a relatively new concept that came to be known as “messianic” religions. At first, this approach was mostly “Jewish” in conception where the follower developed the belief that an active God, through a human agent, would redeem this world of the living, despite the apparent invincibility of the existing power elites.

Later, with defeat of the “aggressive resisters”, within these messianic groups, there were splits between those who saw God working for the good of the people in “this world, and those who believed that God would reward the “faithful”, not “in this world” but in the “next world.” We know that the most successful of these forms of “passive resistance,” was the one that sought relief from the political and cultural failures in this world, in the “next world.” Eventually, these messianic believers became known over time as Christians.

- It appears from what sources we have, that the few Jewish followers of Jesus sat out the first revolt against Rome, and then the Christians also refused to participate in the Bar Kokhba revolt. This lack of support for fighting for rights in this world is what appears to have caused the final break between Jews and followers of Christ. This firmly established Christianity as a separate religion.

There were also great disagreements and conflicts among the Jews, between the “passive” and “active” resisters, as well as between various sub groups of the active resisters. They often fought amongst themselves more than they did against the Greeks and Romans or against the local “accepters.”

- Several sources state that while the Romans were besieging them, inside Jerusalem a “Jewish civil war” raged (66-70 AD).

But again, these types of internal fights seem common among “oppressed peoples” fighting for “liberation.” Much of the histories of anti-colonial struggles of the later half of the 20th century are filled with stories of intense infighting between rival factions. Often the colonial rulers, as we see both in Roman and in modern times, extend their rule by playing one faction off against another.

For many peoples of the old “Near East”, the arrival of the Greeks, and then of the Romans, represented the most desperate of times. Societies often fall into tremendous internal conflicts while looking at many different options to address this elimination of the “traditional values”. In modern times, we have seen the same thing.

- In just the last hundred years or so we have seen two world wars and constant other struggles, from outright wars to civil wars. We finally saw the end of Monarchal rule in the major Western European states, and the end of European colonialism, with its inherent racist philosophy.

In the 20th century, all forms of “answers” have been posted in an attempt to “fill the void” created by the collapse of the “old order” of monarchy and colonialism/racism. Beginning with “liberal democracy” we also saw the rise and fall (or at least adaptation, as in China) of Communism, the rise and fall of Fascism, and even flirtation with Anarchism, not to mention a host of “romantic” options, and the development of “democratic socialism.” All these ideas were efforts to replace the old order.

- The struggle in the “market place of ideas” to bring about a new society continues today with the rise of a new breed of leaders in South America. In addition, we now have efforts to renew the ancient concept of merging religion and the state (The Islamic Republic of Iran, and others). Similarly, the rise of the religious fundamentalist political efforts in the United States represents yet another of the new contenders to replace the old order.

The crisis of ideas and efforts to find new answers can be seen as the hallmarks of the 20th century. This is somewhat reminiscent of the crisis and conflicts that faced the Near East as the concepts that had supported society for 2000 plus years were being destroyed and devalued by the new Greek, and then Roman, rulers. This was indeed a time of crisis.

As noted, this “chaos of competing ideas” of our time is similar to what was going on in the “Old Near East” as the Greeks and Roman cultures took hold. The process was more complicated back then, for some overt reasons, such as the lack of tools of mass communication. This meant that ideas were spread more slowly, and were often miscommunicated as they were spread, primarily by word of mouth. Another major problem was the very frameworks that were available for use for the “discussion” of ideas.

- In the older world, most of the discussion was based in “religious” concepts rather than “political or economic theory” because the “thinking of the time” had not really developed the broader means for public discussion.

Therefore, (outside of Greece and Rome cities) the main politics of the day were, to put it in modern terms “struggles for national self-determination” (or self rule – or “Romans go home”) and the issues of “religious freedom,” at least initially, were not a major issue, since both Greek and Roman rulers officially (during most of their period of rule) accepted local religions, while only requiring some symbolic acceptance of the religion of the new rulers.

- Much of the early complaints about the Christians from Roman officials were that they, the Christians, would not perform the simplest of sacrifices to the Roman emperor. The officials had no issue with them promulgating a new religion. The issue was that they were a public nuisance (like modern day flag burners).

However, this “struggle for national independence” was often phrased by the people of the time mainly as a religious struggle. In addition, outside the Hellene/Roman cities, most of the

issues of social justice (the needs of the poor, etc) were also based in religious discussions, rather than issues of “overt social justice.”

We know of obvious exceptions to this concept, where, in fact the struggles of the times were put into some what modern terms, but these were from Greek/Roman centers, rather than Middle Eastern centers and countries.

- The mid- and later Republic period of Rome later 200’s – 30 BC was dominated by these social issues, (complete with assassinations of public leaders and “general strikes” by the poor as well as “fascist dictatorships”) and these problems were seen and debated by the Romans in somewhat “modern political” terms.

However, that level of “civil life” had not been widely incorporated into the Hellenization of the Near East, and often deliberately so, (to keep the locals “from getting any smart ideas).” So the frame of reference for these “colonial peoples” was limited to what they already knew, and what the Ancients used to justify all actions was religion. .

And, because of the superficial religious tolerance of the Greeks and the Romans, it was also safer for people of the time to talk in religious terms so that the ideas could often be “coded.”

- This use of religion was similar to how African-American slaves took the one area where they received “education” and converted it to their longings for freedom. The African-Americans converted Christianity to their needs, adopting Moses and the 400 years of slavery of the Hebrews into parables to their situation. Most of the most famous Slave gospel songs are coded songs longing for earthly freedom, not just a better afterlife.

One example of this ancient coding is the “Book of Revelations” which many historians now consider to be a rant against the Emperor Nero, rather than an overt prediction for the end of the world. There is much complicated thinking involved in this conclusion including the use of ancient “numerology” by which the full name of Nero adds up to a total of 666 (Hebrew used letters for numbers) and therefore the “sign of the beast,” or 666, is actually sum total of the number values of **Nero Claudius Drusus** (I was never good with the Hebrew Numerals... So I’ll take it on face value that it works.)

For example, scholars who believe that the [Book of Revelation](#) refers to historical people and events argue that the number represents [Nero](#). In [Hebrew gematria](#), every letter has a corresponding number. Summing these numbers gives a numeric value to a word or name. In Hebrew, “Nero Caesar” is spelled “נרון קסר”, pronounced “Neron Ke(i)sar”. Adding the corresponding values yields 666, as shown:

Resh	Samekh	Qoph	Nun	Vav	Resh	Nun
200	60	100	50	6	200	50

Removing the terminal נ (written as ן) makes the name “Nero” rather than “Neron”, and makes the numeric value 616, which may explain that variation. The hypothesis that

666 is a code for a Roman emperor seems to have historical support. The emperors were noted for their oppression of both [Jews](#) and [Christians](#). Both communities were known to use numerology, codes and symbols (such as the [Ichthys](#)) when living under Roman rule to avoid persecution.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Number_of_the_Beast_\(numerology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Number_of_the_Beast_(numerology))

Therefore, during this time period in the Near East, religion continued to be the main form of discourse, and also most obvious means to communicate dissent.

- So, the debates among the resisters were mainly talked about in terms of “How do we get God, (or in most cases, the Gods), to get the Romans go home, as opposed to “Romans Go Home..”
- Or, how do we get ourselves “right” so that God will stop punishing us by using the (in the case of Jews) Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks or Romans, as his tools of punishment for our sins.

And the hope of many during this time was for a leader, a Messiah, to come and end the occupation of the alien peoples and their non-conforming religion.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection G - The Rise and Fall of the Aggressive Active Resisters - Another Crisis

With Cyrus the promise of Jeremiah concerning the remnants of the Jews was supposed to be fulfilled. However, what success there was for the new Jewish colony established under the protection of the Persians existed for a relatively short run of some four hundred years. The approach to establish an independent state based on the new Jewishness failed again. First, after only some 150 years of Persian protection, the Greeks (was Alexander also God's will?) replaced the Persians and gave less protection and less respect to the Jewish religion. After some benign neglect, the struggle over control of the empire after the death of Alexander stretched into generations. It became a long term conflict over culture with more "aggressive Greek" rulers (who decided to force Hellenize all of their subjects) eventually leading to open warfare (Maccabean Revolts) between the Jewish colony and the Greek overlords (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judas_Maccabeus) And to the surprise of almost all around, the revolt succeeded and created a new brief period of independence for this new "hyper" Jewish state.

The story of the Maccabee revolt can not be told here in any detail, but is one of the great historical achievements of all time. In many ways, it can be said to be the first successful "war of national liberation" recorded.

- The **Maccabees** ([Hebrew](#): מַכַּבִּים or מַקְבִּים, *Makabim*) were a [Jewish](#) national liberation movement that fought for and won independence from [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) of the [Hellenistic Seleucid dynasty](#), who was succeeded by his infant son [Antiochus V Eupator](#). The Maccabees founded the [Hasmonean](#) royal [dynasty](#) and established Jewish independence in the [Land of Israel](#) for about one hundred years, from [164 BCE](#) to [63 BCE](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maccabees>

The victory is celebrated every year by Jews in the festival of Chanukah. And as in the words represented on the dradel, the toy top associated with the holiday, by the Hebrew letters, "a great miracle happened there."

And with the win, (actually a long and drawn out affair with many defeats for the Jews as well as victories,) the Jews established their first independent state since the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, more than 400 years before. It did not last that long (in terms of history) as a political entity

- The **Hasmoneans** ([Hebrew](#): חַשְׁמוֹנָיִם, *Hashmonaiym*, [Audio](#)) were the ruling dynasty of the **Hasmonean Kingdom** ([140–37 BCE](#)),^[1] an [autonomous Jewish state](#) in ancient [Israel](#). The Hasmonean dynasty was established under the leadership of [Simon Maccabaeus](#), two decades after his brother [Judah the Maccabee](#) defeated the [Seleucid](#) army during the [Maccabee Revolt](#) in [165 BCE](#). The Kingdom was the only independent Jewish state to exist in the four centuries after the [Kingdom of Judah](#) was destroyed by [Babylonia](#) in [586 BCE](#). It survived for over 100 years before becoming a [client Kingdom](#) of the [Roman Empire](#) under the [Herodian Dynasty](#) in 37 BCE. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean>

It should be noted that the Books of Maccabeus are not in the Jewish version of the Old Testament, but is in the Christian version. One clear reason for this lack of inclusion in the Jewish book is that the long term failure of the revolts against Rome (not covered in those books) helped to undermine the Jewish claim regarding the Returnees as being the rightful heirs of Jeremiah's promise. The Christians used the books to show that the promise of God was actually not the Maccabean state but the salvation offered through Jesus.

- While initially successful, the Maccabean strategy of warfare against the occupying powers, over the long-term, for the Jews, failed and failed dramatically.

But, at first, there was victory, and independence. Then, after some eighty years of self-rule, the Romans came into the area, and after some 120 years of cultural struggles, and indirect and direct rule of Rome, another revolt, modeled on the Maccabees, occurred leading to the complete destruction of the "promised" Jewish state and also the destruction of the new temple (again) (70 AD). The estimated deaths in the area during the "great revolt" were tremendous, in the many 100,000's killed, if not greater.

The Romans took this revolt with a very high regard. They could not afford to let any people win their freedom (since it would encourage others). And despite initial success of the revolt, the Roman came back into Judea with great force and determination and crushed the newly "liberated" Jewish state (which lasted less than two years), and destroyed all involved in the revolt. (By popular belief, the last Jewish several hundred resisters committed suicide at Masada, rather than submit to Roman slavery.) We can see the importance that the Romans placed on this victory, as they made the victory celebration a major one, replete with the construction of a major "victory arch", the Arch of Titus, in the center of Rome. There serious political consequences, as well:

- The failure to successfully defeat the revolt (or to put it in modern terms, to "support our troops in Judea") may have been a major cause for the coup that led to the death of Nero and his eventual replacement by the leading Roman general in Judea, Vespasian.



<http://sights.seindal.dk/img/orig/8209.jpg>

As a side note, the Romans used the survivors of the Jewish Wars as a slave labor force to build the great Coliseum in Rome. Although that is not part of our main story line, it does help to explain how there came to be a large Jewish population in the city of Rome.

Despite the enormous losses of the Jews, the first revolt against the Romans was followed some seventy years later with an even bloodier revolt (Bar Kokhba, 134-37 AD)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar_Kokhba_revolt This revolt almost ended Jewry (estimates of 3/4s of all Jews in Judea killed), and resulted in the absolute banning by the Romans of Jews from Judea (the legal basis for the Diaspora).

- There was actually a third revolt about which little is known, occurring in 115-117 AD, between the two great revolts in Judea, and involving mainly the Jews of North Africa and Cyprus. This revolt was initially actually relatively successful and one in which the Jewish rebels killed almost a ½ million Greek and Romans and took over Cyprus and much of Egypt including Alexandria, and is perhaps the major reason why Roman forces had to be withdrawn from the newly conquered areas of Mesopotamia (The revolt was eventually repressed with typical Roman force, with great slaughter of Jews where ever they were in the Empire.) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitos_War

In every way that could be stated, the revolts against Rome clearly ended the second Jewish Commonwealth. It meant that the “promises of God”, through the covenant with Ezra, and the “returnees,” that the Jews would never to be “wiped clean” from Israel again, were now void. The Jews, those who remained alive, now faced yet another crisis, and yet another rethinking of Judaism. It is at this point that they also became a “homeless people” for the next 2000 years.

After the failures of the revolts against Rome, and the destruction of the state of the “returnees,” the focus of Judaism was again back to Babylon, and the concepts of Rabbinical Judaism developed there during the Exile which had continued there through the “Second Jewish Commonwealth.” In fact, the Jews of Babylon continued to be the major center of Jewish populations during the time of the revolts (despite the large Jewish presence in Alexandria and Jerusalem.) and became the dominate faction after the failure. The relatively small and impoverished Jewish communities in Europe looked to Babylon for legal and spiritual leadership for more then 1800 years.

There are “folk stories” involving how the Jews were able find acceptance from the Romans for the development of the rabbinical type of Judaism in Palestine as the first great revolt was being defeated (leaders being carried out in coffins to plead with Titus). But that community established in Palestine, was relatively short lived, as the rabbis gave great support to the second great revolt and even declared the leader, Bar Kokhba, the messiah. The Romans found no kindness left towards even the “passive” Jewish peoples after this revolt. After the “shock and awe” of the Roman repressions, the cultural and “political center” of Jewish life gave up on Palestine and almost all eyes and hopes shifted to Babylon.

It is often stated that what is known as Rabbinical Judaism, which has a very passive approach to society and power, (often the hall mark of losers) grew out of the failures of the revolts against Rome. This is a Western perspective, and ignores the fact that Babylonian Jews had followed this approach to religion for some 500 years before the revolts.

However, what is often not discussed is the “Jewishness” during the first successful revolt. This was an openly zealous “radical” Judaism (often the hall mark of winners), which once in power under the Maccabean monarchy, used the energy created by that desire to please God to purge the newly won lands of both Greek and Phoenician influences.

These numerous revolts occurred against the backdrop of the political and social upheavals created first by the invasion of the Greeks and with it Hellenism. These were followed the invasion of the Romans, and the complete devastation of the subsequent Roman “counter insurgency” against the three Jewish revolts in the Near East, one can not truly see a corollary in the world of today. Some of the impacts on these peoples were:

- Traditions thousands of years old were found to be no longer “valid” or “explainable.”
- A whole new culture was taking the place of that which had been in place since virtually the beginning of recorded time.
- Huge power vacuums in both civil and religious (at that time they were often the same) leadership existed as the wars and repressions of the period eliminated much of the traditional leadership.

We, living in the modern West, especially in the United States, can not really comprehend what these changes must have be like for the peoples, of the time, those who survived. We have little experience in this level of chaos and disorder.

- Russians (in the early 1900’s and during their involvement in World War I) experienced these type of change and responded with the brutality of Communism and Stalin.
- Germany, after World War I, got only a small taste of this chaos and responded with Hitler.

But the level of chaos in these two societies was probably not anywhere near the levels of

chaos of what the Ancient Near East felt with the arrival of the Greeks and then especially the Romans. (Perhaps Russia alone, with its estimated 80 million violent deaths from 1914-1945 can come closest in the West, and China with the impact of the Tai'ping rebellion of the 19th century and the war Chinese/Japanese war and civil war of the 20th century could also come close to this comprehensive devastation.)

- Some historians estimate the combination of [natural disasters](#) together with the political insurrections (Tai'ping rebellion) may have cost as many as 200 million Chinese lives between 1850 and 1865 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiping_Rebellion

The closest thing in “modern” culture we can maybe compare it to is the impact of European colonialism on the rest of the world, especially for example the way the English approached (with total distained) the cultures of China and India. These ancient cultures of India and China went through centuries of trying to determine how to best deal with the invasion of peoples, technologies, religions and organization, which was completely unfamiliar to them, brought by the British and other Europeans.

The impacts on these cultures led to wide ranges in responses, including open revolts and new religions, mostly based in blending of traditional and new British ideas.

- The most obvious “blend” of modern times was manifested in the “Tai'ping Rebellion” in China, led by a man who was proclaimed “God’s Chinese Son”, and was proclaimed as the brother of Jesus Christ. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiping_Rebellion

This revolt came about as a prelude to the “war lord” period, “civil war”, the Japanese invasion, and the horrors of Mao and his Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. During the 150 year period between of 1830 to 1980, in China, perhaps as many as 400 million people, and perhaps far more, died violent deaths or died of starvation or in floods (mainly caused by the lack of civil authority to control the dikes systems).

- Yet, percentage wise, this 400 million represents maybe 30-40% of Chinese who lived during this 150 year period. The reported percent of Jewish deaths during the Roman revolts are more like 70-80%.

India was spared some of this type chaos as it resisted colonialism, in part due to the great influence of Gandhi. His efforts led to a “blending” on the political level, as India became the world’s largest democracy, incorporating British law and parliamentary systems into traditional India “values.” However despite Gandhi, millions were killed during the Pakistan/Indian separation process, and the “ethnic cleansing” that was part of the events of 1947/8. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_independence) Religious views in both countries hardened as national identity became associated with religious beliefs.

The victory against the Greeks by the Jews did in fact set the tone for the dominance of the “aggressive resisters” in the Jewish culture for the next two centuries, with each new revolt hoping to mimic the success of the Maccabees:

- The successful Maccabee revolt in Judea (167-160 BC) which led to the independent period of “Second Jewish Commonwealth” under the Hasmonean, was the model of the aggressive resisters, for the unsuccessful Jewish revolts of 66-70 AD, and again in the revolt of 132 -135 AD.

(A mistake I think that standard historians make is to not see all the revolts against the

Greeks and the Romans as a single series of effort to “redeem” the holy land for God and the “chosen people; the Maccabee effort was not a stand alone example of success, but the initial effort during some 250 years (at least) to rid the land of the foreign gods and powers.) In addition, there were revolts prior to the great revolt of 66-70 AD, and there are also records of a Jewish revolt in Palestine as late as 351 AD, and yet again in alliance with the Persians in the mid 7th century.

- During his rule, (in 351) Gallus had to deal with a Jewish rebellion in Palestine.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantius_Gallus

Therefore, among the Jews, the aggressive resisters were more successful in the early stages of the struggle. However, the power of Rome eventually crushed this “philosophy.” So, therefore, over the long term we can see that the aggressive resisters’ approach against the Roman led to the utter destruction of Judea and the official beginning of the “Diaspora.”

The early period of this phase of Jewish “active aggressive resisters” history is quite well documented, thanks to the survival of such text as the writings of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish “deserter” to the Romans during the revolt of 66-70 AD (For a full view of the text of his writings and evaluations, please see <http://pace.cns.yorku.ca/York/york/texts.htm>). And as a “deserter” we need to question his perspective, to some degree. However, other remaining writings of the time period support most of his writings.

- It is said, “The victors write the history” (Winton Churchill is given credit for that quote, but I think it is more likely much older). The deeds done by others which become contradicted by the beliefs of the victors can either be “wiped clean from history” or changed dramatically as time progresses. Josephus was one of those who joined the winning side, wrote the history justifying the winning side, and may have changed events greatly to rationalize his changing of sides.

The initial success and later disasters of the revolts however did tend to bring about some more uniformity within the (surviving) Jewish world:

- The Jews of the first type (the Egyptian Jews) were mainly sidelined as a result of the Revolts of 117, but remained in place to some degree. They were highly influenced by the Babylonians Jews, and also by Hellenization (Philo of Alexandria). However, they were greatly repressed under the later Roman (Christian) period
- The second type, the Jews of the Babylonia model, the Rabbinical Jews, became the dominant form of Judaism in the world.
- The third type of Jew, (the Jewish returnees of the Exile), were destroyed in these many revolts (along with most of their internal sub-groups (Sadducees, Pharisees, etc)).
- The fourth type of Jew, the remnants Jews, in fact re-emerged from the repression of the Jewish state, during this time of disaster, and did so mainly in the new guise of Christianity.

Out of the utter ruin and near extermination of the people as a result of this “active aggressive” resistance, new leaders arose, with new ideas, on how to address this cultural and political chaos. This new leadership, living under the tighter rule of Rome (as a result of nearly endless war over a 150 year period) had to couch these new ideas in the one arena left them by the Romans; religion.

The crisis brought about by the failure of the active aggressive approach, along with the near utter destruction of Judaism, opened the door to far more “passive” approaches to Rome.

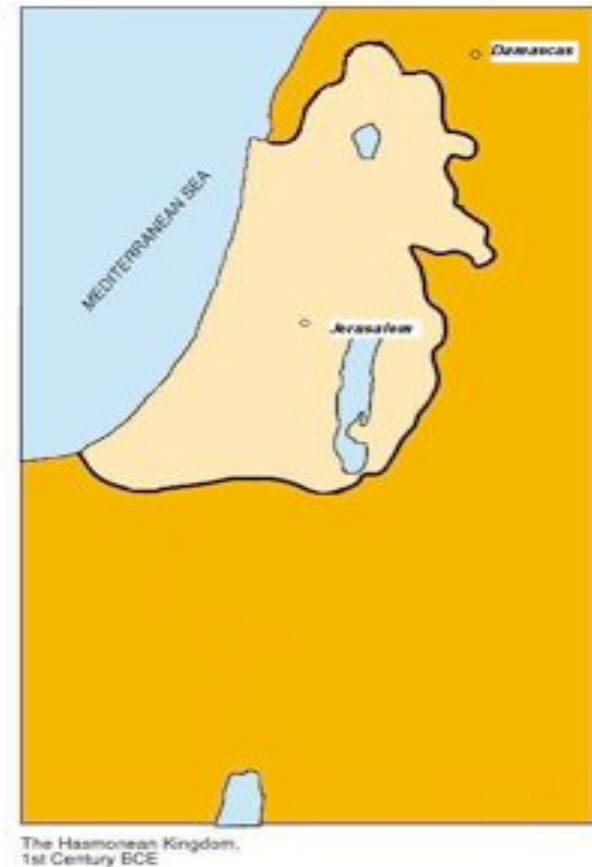
Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section IV – The Second Jewish Commonwealth

Subsection H - When One Door is Shut, Another Is Opened

The very nature of the Maccabee revolt, and initial rule of the Hasmonean kings and queens was that of the style of the “aggressive resisters”, with the goal of “protecting and defending” the religion of God. This became the rallying cry of the fighters. The society that came out of the revolt was more xenophobic than any previous Jewish state, and by far the most “orthodox” of Jewish states. During the revolt, to not be an avid Jew devoted to the 613 commandments was tantamount to supporting the Greeks. And once in power, the Hasmoneans, based on the fears of the older prophets and with the concept of collective responsibility in mind , went on to force convert all non-Jews, and “semi” Jews under their direct control.

- With the success of the first revolt against the Classicalists (the Maccabean revolt), a Jewish state, for one of the first times in history, was in a position of power to use forced conversions to Judaism, as a means of developing “state unity” (or at least the first time since King Josiah).
 - Despite the fact that the revolt was started against the Greeks for their attempt to force convert and develop state unity through a state religion, once in power, the new Jewish state used the same tactics. And during that brief period of power (130-60 BC) the Jewish kings did so, including the forced conversion of the peoples of the Galilee.
 - forced conversion of the peoples of the Galilee.



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/e/e2/Hasmonean-map.jpg>

The peoples living around the Sea of Galilee at this time were mainly the fourth category of Jews, the remnant peoples least effected by the reforms whose religious practices were most similar to the old blend of Ba'al and Yahwehism.

These people of Galilee were among the poor (and remote) rural peoples who had resisted the Greek influence, and also the "returnee" Jewish influence. They mostly maintained much of the "old ways" including the Ba'al religion of their very ancient ancestors, the Phoenicians.

- This type of cultural resistance is not new and we see it throughout history, as the conquered peoples in the more remote areas are able to maintain their traditionalist beliefs. There are more recent examples of this tendency. Many people in the area now known as Lithuania, despite almost 1000 years of contact with Christianity only converted in the late 14th century. However, it turns out that the conversion was really only active in the ruling class and "paganism" was practiced openly in the rural areas well into the 17th century.

So, just barely two or three generations prior to the supposed time of Jesus, the Galileans were forced converted to Judaism by the aggressive Hasimodian (descendants of Judah Maccabeus) Jewish kingdom.

- This forced conversion is one of the key and forgotten pieces of this story of Christianity and Ba'al. Until a century or so before the time of the beginning of Christianity, the region of the Galilee was mostly not Jewish, and not greatly influenced by the Greeks, Romans, or almost any of the new "thinkers" except for the Persians. Then, came the forced conversion to Judaism, and soon after, the Romans went into

the area and created some major cities. The area of Galilee, the place where Jesus supposedly grew up, was now an area of great stress and social confusion as the relatively new notions of the New Judaism and the Roman classicalism converged on these isolated and “traditionalist” people.

- The people there tried to hold on to their traditional beliefs. But like other peoples subjected to conquest and forced religious conversion, they needed to both “code” their religion and “morph” the old ways, while trying to keep them as much as possible, with a new veneer (the fourth type of response to new ideas.).

The impacts of the winning and losing revolts as well as the impacts of new religious ideas obtained from both Persian and Greek/Roman influences set the stage for the development of modern (Rabbinical passive) Judaism, as well as the development of Christianity. This great tumult sets the stage for to the later rise of Islam, as well.

With the destruction of the “Second Jewish Commonwealth,” with the power of the Jewish state to not only force convert, but also to maintain conformity, now gone, a vacuum of power once again opened in the area where there was mainly the old “Ba’alist, and “Hebrew” culture. With this vacuum came the place where these old beliefs could be morphed into “new” concepts to develop with Roman benign neglect (as they did on most religious issues). These “morphers” did not face initial repression from the xenophobic Jewish state, either.

This power vacuum allowed for repressed ideas and cultures to resurface; and with the “market place of ideas open, the stage was set, as it was throughout the Old World, for some “new morphing” and “new religions.”

This influence of politics on the development of the new religion can be seen by looking at the rise of Christianity on a parallel time line with the fall of the Jewish state and failures of the revolts.

Jewish state decaying –

Hasamonian rule ended
and replaced by Herod (The Great)

Jesus birth placed during Herod’s rule

Herod’s sons rule in Galilee and
other parts of Judea,
Rome mainly controls area

Jesus’ mission and date, Paul’s vision, Acts?

66 AD Revolt – Destruction of State
and Jerusalem

Very Small Christian community “sits it out”

70-117 Jews rebuilt Jerusalem,
again prosper in Empire

First independent mention of the Christians (90’s)
first notice by Roman intellectuals and first
Christian “apologist” Gospels and other writings
completed and focused on “other world:”
Stories take on Anti-Jewish Pro Roman vent

117-119 Kitos revolts, near Jewish
victory in the East, severe Roman
repression retributions. .

Small Christian communities “sit it out” victories
tend to support Romans by passive stance
No overt repressions of Christians during revolt.

134-7 Great second revolt fails,
¾ of Jews in area killed
Jews banned from Judea.

Christians “sit it out” Make strong
efforts to disassociate themselves from the Jews

Post revolts –

General repression of Jews throughout
the Empire

Greater acceptance of Christianity,
and more spread of the religion
focused on the “other world”

Therefore, the failure of the Jewish revolts opened the door for the “Christians”. The failure of the active resisters opened the door for the morphers and the mergers to come to the fore.

First of all, the Jews were in such a state of destruction and dispersal that they could not offer any formal resistance to the new creed. In addition, since the Christians did not side with the revolts they were less persecuted for being “Jewish.”

- It is quite ironic that at the time the Christians were claiming to be so greatly persecuted by the Romans (with some 4000 martyrs at most; Gibbon claims no more than 1500 see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Christians#Persecution_from_the_second_century_to_Constantine), potentially millions of Jews were being slaughtered, (by crucifixion and many other means) enslaved, and made to be fighters in the circuses across the empire, by the very same Romans.
- The actually ratio of Jewish to Christian death in the first 200 years of the Christian era must have been close to 20,000 to one.

Yet, due to the religious domination in the teaching of history, in our general history we hear almost none of this.

Also, with this almost total destruction on the Jewish people and the failure of the revolts, many peoples who longed for freedom from Roman rule lost heart. The concept of breaking away from Roman rule fell away within the Empire, (at least for a while) and it seemed that only the most “barbaric of peoples” living on the fringes of civilization could hope to resist this power (the Germans, for example). And while Rome could not break the power of Persia, the Persians could do little to help internal efforts against Rome (except some in Armenia and Judea).

- So both the surviving Jews, and the other “oppressed” and enslaved peoples of the Empire could no longer consider the alternative of revolt in this world; they looked for other means of hope, including looking for “salvation in the next world.”
- As pointed out by Maccoby, the loss of freedom and the loss of hope against the oppression of Rome, helped give rise to support for a religion that focused on salvation in the next world, and on a force of power that would sweep in and destroy this Roman dominated world; that new hope was Christianity.

However, the revolt against the Greeks and against Rome had a major impact on the early Christians in that they were greatly influenced by the Jews willingness to die for the “cause.”

The idea of Christian martyrdom perhaps grew out of the Jewish fighters and families who were willing to die rather than to live as slaves or give up their religion.

- The martyrdoms described in II **Maccabees**, especially of the mother and her seven sons, have given the book undying value as an inspiration and encouragement to the faithful of all ages and creeds... This feature of the Maccabean heroism made a special appeal to the Christianity of the first four centuries. "The figure of the martyr, as the Church knows it, dates from the persecution of Antiochus; all subsequent martyrologies derive from the Jewish books which recorded the sufferings of those who in that day were strong and did exploits" (E. Bevan, "House of Seleucus," 1902, ii. 175).

<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=18&letter=M&search=1%20Maccabees>

The destruction of the Jewish hopes for freedom had profound impacts on the world, little recognized by the writers of Western history. For historians in the Christian age, under the great influence of Christianity, the destruction of the active Jewish resisters, allowed for the success of their religious forefathers. Therefore, as with all things, the winners write the history and with the crushing of the Jewish efforts, their role at efforts to end the tyranny Rome of and their hundred of thousands, if not millions of martyrs for their one true god was written out of history.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and Its Foundations

Subsection A- A New “In the Beginning”

For all involved in these struggles presented in this book, and so many others, that rise out of the chaos created by “clash of cultures,” the claim that the victory (when there is a victory) rises to a level of such importance that it must be declared a “new start” ... a new “in the beginning” of history was frequent. The “beginnings” seem almost endless in world history, but to name just a few;

- The French Revolution restarted time as “year one.”
- The Islamic revolution starts time from the Hadj or Mohammad leaving Mecca for Medina;
- The multiple leaders of the Anabaptist revolts in Holland proclaimed the New Jerusalem, and the new age; and restarted the calendar at a year one.
- Hitler starting the 1000 year Reich, and
- The song of socialist revolution, called the “International,” claimed “the world will rise on new foundations, we who have been naught, we shall be all.”

Oh yes, the song also claims that the struggle of the workers of the world is in fact “the final conflict.”

In *“Brave New World,”* Aldous Huxley projected that in a future society the measuring of time was counted as “BF” and “AF” (before and after Ford, or before and after the use of mass production through an assembly line.)

Also, amongst the few items we have from the second great revolt against Rome, the Bar Kokhba revolt, are coins, where the dating are marked “Year 2” of the new state.



Bar Kochba silver [Zuz/denarius](#). [Obverse](#): trumpets surrounded by "To the freedom of [Jerusalem](#)". [Reverse](#): A [lyre](#) surrounded by "Year two to the freedom of [Israel](#)"

And of course, with the focus of this book, we need to include the new beginning started by the Christians and the reordering of time declared by them, (BC, AD). However, we also need to look at how the Christians supported their concept of “a new era, a new time” by their efforts to eliminate of the whole history of the world, other than what appeared in their Bible.

So like all before them, and so many after them, who declared they were the new “universal right” and had the ability to “start the world over again”, the Christians declared “in the beginning.” This declaration as stated in the Gospels, was not only to mean, the beginning of when God created the Earth,

John I

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2He was with God in the beginning.

But also, it seems intended to mean that people were now “in the beginning” of the new Christian era, the world was being made over, through a new “covenant” with God. And since the world was made over and there was a new covenant, the past was not really needed, except as a means of justifying themselves. The writings of the past were only good for looking at predictions that Jesus was coming, and that his coming was preordained.

- This “new beginning” was a new covenant with God, based on the failures of at least four previous covenants that God had made with the Jews (Abraham, Moses, David and Ezra/Nehemiah) to enable them to have Canaan, and to stay there (with the obvious failure of all four of the covenants.)

It wasn't of course, until the West was in almost absolute chaos (with the “fall of Rome” and the degeneration of the successor German kingdoms), that the practice in the West, of counting the history of the world, starting with Christ's birth (or Anno Domini) began. Even then, the Christian's restart their calendar with day one being the announcement of Mary becoming pregnant. Until that time or what we now call the “early middle ages”, despite Christian pretensions, the “Roman world” was still going, and there was not really a “new beginning” yet.

- When Christ was first “born” was “calculated” in 525 AD and then not widely used in the West until the 8th Century (see) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anno_Domini

Even within Christianity there was not agreement on this concept of measuring time and declaring a new Beginning.

- The Byzantine Empire [and therefore the Eastern Orthodox Church], used a year starting on 1 Sept, but they didn't count the years since the birth of Christ. Instead, they counted years since the creation of the world, which they dated to 1 September 5509 B.C.E. <http://webexhibits.org/calendars/year-history.html>

So, when Western Europe saw the potential problems or joy with the “millennium” of 1000 AD, the Greek world saw the year as 6509, and wondered what the fuss was about.

- This idea of the Christian era being the true new beginning took a great deal of time to be incorporated into Western thought, and it took until almost the nadir of the West (the

darkest part of the dark ages) for the legacy of Rome to finally fade away and the “Christian way” of determining the world and its history to take hold.

It wasn't until the time of Charlemagne that the West resets its timeline from Caesar to Christ.

We see this holdover of thought, despite the Church's effort to destroy the past. We see others clinging to the memory of the Classical world; the writings of such Church members as Sidonius Apollinarius, Ausonius of Bordeaux, Claudian and Jordanes all have references to Achilles in them. (Sidonius was a bishop and Jordanes a priest)

Yet, it appeared that for all this new religion of Christianity had going for it, in the face of the failure of the Jewish revolts, it did not grow very much, in terms of attracting new members, until a new crisis came that created doubt that the Romans could offer security “in this world.” Then many, not just the poor and enslaved, but many of the elite, also began to consider “salvation in the next world” as the only solution to a culture falling apart in front of their eyes.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and Its Foundations

Subsection B - A Quick Review of the Rise and Fall and Rise and Fall and Rise of Christianity

With the chaos created by Roman/Greek invasions of the East, we saw that there were four types of responses, the accepters, resisters, mergers and morphing. With the defeat of the Jewish Revolts, for all intensive purposes, the “resisters” were destroyed (and apparently the accepters justified). However, into this power vacuum that the defeats created, the “mergers” and “morphers” came to fill the void.

Both during the revolts, and more so afterwards, many of the people in the area attempted to reconcile the new ideas of the Greeks and Persians with their own; their ideas that had been around for thousands of years. We have records of some of the melding of ideas in the attempt to create a new order of things out of the “best of both worlds.” We also have records of the “morphing” of ideas in order to maintain the old order under different terms; a “passive resistance” to this new order of the Greeks and Romans.

There are extensive “popular” and “scholarly” books and journals that today, define this blending, and morphing and also those that offer challenges or refutations of the ideas of these blending and morphings. The debates are extensive and both exciting and tedious (based on the view point of the reader).

- These books and papers discuss in great detail the impact of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Jewish, Persian, Anatolian and Indian concepts that went into the development of the shaping of this new blending and morphing, this new “in the beginning” that took in many forms, including the form that came to be called Christianity.

It is not my intent to challenge these papers or ideas, but to add to them the concept that prior to all the blending and morphing, the religion that dominated the region from which Christianity developed for well over 2000 years prior had a substantial impact on the concepts and the creation of this new religion,. And, that religion that was dominant in the area was not really Judaism, but the religion of the Phoenicians.

I am proposing that in this “power vacuum” that was created by the surge of the Greek and Roman world into the Near East area, and the crushing of the Jewish revolts, there was indeed a merging of many concepts, some relatively new and some very ancient, and the creation of many new religions and political tendencies, of which Christianity eventually became the “winner.”

The popular concept that exists, at least in the United States, of Christianity being a story of a great rise, once people heard “the good news,” is a huge misconception. The real history of Christianity is one of near failure in its infancy, of early great internal and external competition, of great gains followed by great decline and almost complete defeat, followed by a great “resurrection.” To understand this book, we need to take another brief side step and give an abridged overview of the global history of the religion.

This simple review of the Christian rise and fall and rise again includes:

- 40-300 – Slow expansion in the Roman world and outside

By the end this time no more then 10% of the Roman population is Christian, and in

the West, it may have been as low as 1 or 2%.)

Church offers diverse views on what it was to be Christian and lots of local autonomy and diversity. “Church Fathers” writings represent this diversity

Slow agreement on “orthodox” books (with great infighting)

Anti-Orthodox “Gnostics” groups strong in many areas

Time of mild Roman repression, and of a relatively small number of Christian martyrs.

Time of internal debates about nature of religion and real message of religion (justice in this world or the next.)

Time of external Church rivals (Sol Invictus, Mithraism, later –Manichaeism, many others very active, with wide spread support and often supported by Emperors.

○ 300-400 – Rise within Roman state ---

Worst of the repressions (Diocletian) followed by legalization (Constantine) followed by declaration of sole religion of the Empire (Theodosius)

Huge splits in church (at least three major tendencies) –

German immigrants and soldiers mainly become “Arian” Christians (or non-Trinity Christians)

Egyptian and other Asian Christians saw Christ with a single “nature”

Western and Anatolian Christians saw Christ with two “natures”

Change of Emperor often meant change in type of Christianity and wholesale changes in Bishops – major fighting and numerous deaths involved in these conflicts.)

Emperors take sides and often demand but do not get peaceful resolutions of conflicts.

War against Classicalist culture begins

First major church efforts at central organization and authority – They often fail in these efforts.

Gnostics repressed. “Non-Orthodoxy” repressed ... Potentially ten’s of thousands are killed in internal Christian fighting.

First official Christian states are Armenia and Ethiopia (both border states to Rome proper)

Official Nicene “Creeds” developed and fought over for at least 75 years.

Emperor Julian's short lived effort at preventing the repression of the Classical worldview fails with his death after 18 month reign.

○ 400 – 476 – “Universal Church”

The Christians' world technically includes all of the Roman Empire and several areas on its borders (although many areas within the Empire are only nominally Christian.)

Five major bishops fight for control and influence (Constantinople, Alexandria, Rome, Antioch, Hippo (Carthage)). All claim supremacy.

For a short time, Emperors are “Orthodox” and demand popular conformity to

the Orthodox view. Great repression of “pagans” and non-Orthodox Christians; potentially hundreds of thousands killed by Church and State.

The Emperors support wars against Classicalist culture ... ban almost all knowledge not presented in the Bible.

As Western Emperor’s authority falls, in the west the Church almost becomes the state; as the Eastern Roman State consolidates its power even more so, in the East the Church tends to become an arm of the state, tightly controlled by the Emperors

The Orthodox Church in the West nearly falls apart as new “German” rulers are either “pagan” or “Arian” Christians.

- 500-650 – Near End

West in chaos and is deeply depopulated, East is in almost constant war with the Persians, and come close to collapse several times. The Eastern Church split over “nature of Christ” The stronger Eastern Emperors conduct campaigns of repression in Egypt and other areas against non-orthodox Christians.

Christian World almost destroyed by Germans, Huns, Turkic tribes and others in the West, and Persians in the East.

Twenty Year war with Persians leaves Eastern Empire near collapse, but briefly recovers lost territories.

- 650 -750 First wave of Islam –

Christianity loses all of the Near East, North Africa, Spain, Sicily (and parts of Southern Italy and Southern France for a number of years). Many areas accept Islamic rule to be free from the tyranny of Church’s mandates on the “nature of Christ”.

Constantinople survives several Islamic attacks and a relatively stable border is established near current day Turkey/Syrian boarder.

Islamic forces don’t invade Western Europe beyond Spain because of a few minor defeats, but they mainly find nothing of value there.

Rome and Constantinople only major Bishoprics to “survive” (as Christian) the initial Islamic attack; both claim supremacy

- 600 -1000 Recovery and Expansion of Christianity in Western Europe

Frankish kingdom becomes “Orthodox (Roman) Christian and fights Arian Germans for the Roman Church. Slow conversion of Germans and others to the Roman Church. Pope in Rome claims supremacy; great fights with Constantinople concerning rites and power.

Church almost collapses again from the Norse invasions, but slowly converts the Norse who settle in France, then in England, and Sicily

East pummeled by streams of invading ‘pagan” peoples (Bulgars, Avars, Penchencks, Slavs, etc) Balkans nearly depopulated of Christians

Frankish Empire (Charlemagne) revives Orthodox Church in West. First “crusades” against non-believers (in Saxony and in Spain)

Holy Roman Empire established in the West, making break with Constantinople

complete in both religious and political loyalties

- 1000 – 1500 – Periods of Militant Christianity in West, (leading to near failure)
East and West Church split (Great Schism) into Roman and Eastern Orthodox,
Eastern Empire forces destroyed at the Battle for Manzikerts and lose most of Anatolia to Islamic Turks.

Period of great expansion of Roman Church into Northern Europe and Greek Church into Russia

With Norse conversion, and use of Norse and Frankish warriors, Roman Church recovers almost all of Spain, Sicily, much of the Holy land, and

For sixty years takes Constantinople and establishes a Latin Empire in Greece, and what is now Western Turkey (allowing for greater Islamic gains in Anatolia)
The forced reunification of the Church not accepted by peoples of the East).

“Crusades” in Baltic Sea area set up new Latin States (modern day Estonia, Latvia.)

Church institutes “inquisition” to force conformity, destroys southern France in religious wars, begins “reign of terror” in Spain to deal with converted populations (Jews, Moors)

Jews expelled from most of Western Europe

Mongol invasion destroys much of the Eastern Church’s power bases in Kiev and Russia.

Lithuania is the last of the major European state to convert to Christianity (1385)

Turks take back the Holy land, take much of the Balkans, and finally take Constantinople, Eastern Church almost destroyed, survives only with support of Russia. (Eastern Christians prefer Turkic Muslim rule rather than to be brought into “union” with Roman Church”. Western efforts against the Turks fail

Western Church in chaos, as most of the time there are rival popes, some times three popes. (During this period all Christians were condemned to hell and excommunicated from the Church by one pope or the other, great loss of prestige followed)

For a period Popes become a tool of French King (and located in Avignon – called of all things the “Babylonian Captivity” by Church leaders in Rome.)

Popular risings against the Church take place in many places, repressed by nobles often with great slaughter (Southern France)

Spanish re-conquest completed with Jews and Moors all expelled or forced converted.

- 1500 – 1650 – Wars of Crises and Repression by Church Leadership in West
Church (and West) survives Turkish onslaught with new wealth found in New World (Inca and Aztec gold pays for professional armies and navies in Europe to halt the advance of the Turks. (However, Turks remain a major foe and offensive power - Turks besiege Vienna as late as 1687)

Reformation tears Christianity apart, now three main branches,

- Eastern with adherents mainly at this time in Russia, Balkans and Greece

- Roman Church, with adherents in Spain/Portugal (and their Empires) Italy, Ireland and Poland, 2/3s of France and half of Germany.
- Reformed Churches/Protestant (Lutheran, Anglican, etc) with adherents in most of Northern Europe, and 1/3 of France,

Roman Church expands with Spanish/Portuguese Empires and force converts peoples of “Latin America” (or those who survived the invasions) and in The Philippines It mainly fails in its efforts in India and China.

The use of the Inquisition is at its height, used throughout the world to try to enforce religious conformity. Hundreds of thousands charged and have “trials”; tens of thousands killed.

“Reformed” areas have major “witch” scare, potentially 100,000’s killed to “protect society”.

Great religious wars kill nearly 1/3 of German populations and large numbers in France.

1650 – 1870’s – Expansion of Religion outside of Europe – Challenges in Europe

Protestant (English and Dutch) Empires and “Latin Empire” with Spain and France, and Eastern Church by development of massive Russian Empire expand areas of Christian control.

Establishment and expansion of Protestant people in “nearly empty lands” of United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Even with political domination of India and China there is failure in the religious expansions in these area.

American Revolution establishes liberal principles of separation of church and state and creates the role of government as rival of church in areas of social services (schools, health care, feeding the hunger, etc.)

Revolutions in thought and politics challenge the role and power of the church, French Revolution initially bans Christian religion.

Protestant Churches become strongly linked to racism (South Africa, Southern United States) Latin Churches linked to political and social repression (Latin America, Spain) and Christianity is linked to justification for colonial expansion (bring the good news to the savage peoples of the world)

- 1870-present – Top and then Near Nadir and Revival

Balkans “liberated” from Muslim rule, “Scramble for Africa” enables church expansion in that continent. The year 1910, is perhaps the height of Christian domination in the world.

Darwin and modern sciences become major challenge to Christian world view.

World War I destroys European strength; Communism takes over much of the land of the Eastern Church. National independence (anti-colonialism) movements begin across the world. Both movements attack Christian connections to colonialism and social repression (Religion is the opiate of the masses)

Great Depression and World War II destroy much of the remaining church power of

Europe; within 30 years almost all of the “Christian” world empires are gone (while many of the peoples of the former colonial areas maintain their Christianity).

Roman Church takes credit for fall of Communism, while also attempting to “modernize”

Marked declines in Christian support in Europe, even with the collapse of Communism. Majority of Christians are in third world (South America and Africa, and Philippines), and US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

Nature of Christianity has changed greatly in these areas as “fundamentalist” and Pentecostal movements have grown in South America, Africa and the United States and “main line (Catholic, Lutheran, etc) churches continue major declines.

Also, a revival of Islam as a major competitor of Christians occurs over the last 30 years.

Fastest growing group in the world in the area of religion is “non-believers”

So we can see that Christianity had at least 3 time periods (with Rome, about 1000 AD, and about 1900 AD) where it was dominant in the West, and other areas, and failed to hold its dominance. In addition, once established, Christianity faced many near collapses with the some of the major ones being about 500 -600 AD (Germans), 650 -750 (first Muslim attacks) 800 AD (Vikings), 1350 -1600 Turkish attacks in Europe proper.

- There is some historical justification to say that Europe (Christianity) was saved from complete Turkic domination by none other than Timer the Lame (or Tamerlane) who met and defeated (and nearly destroyed) the Ottomans in 1402 at a battle near current day Ankara. This defeat so weakened the Ottomans, that it prevented them from continuing their advance unchecked in Europe, and saved Constantinople for another 70 years or so. The Turks did recover and continued to advance in Europe, and ruled much of the Balkans for close to 600 years.

Despite repeated efforts Christians, have made almost no headway in converting of the Chinese, Indians, and Muslims with whom they have had ample opportunity (including long periods of direct rule) to “spread the good news.” In fact, outside of the areas of colonization, where acceptance of the religion was often the key to social advancement (accepters), the only country where many embraced Christianity without direct rule is South Korea.

This side step in our main story line is an attempt to help the reader understand that their view of history is often likely to be biased by their religious beliefs. My intention is to also show that Christianity has had a rocky road throughout its history.

We need to concentrate on that first tumultuous period to better understand the theme of this book, but we also need to come back to this time line again to better understand the idea that threat of total defeat of Christianity occurred time and again.

- The reason that the Church came up with to explain these near defeats has changed little since the beginning of the religion: The Christians took the view of the Returnees from Exile, the Jewish concept that God wants conformity, and without conformity God will punish us. (The focus of the second book in this series)

But the Christians changed the game, for as the Jews saw the failure of the people to maintain conformity as a failure of the people, the Christians frequently considered the failure

of people to conform as the action of the Devil, as opposed to a personal fault. It was only by rooting out the Devil from society, and “freeing” people from the Devil, that conformity and God’s love could be obtained. In addition, the Christians maintained the belief that all peoples need to conform. At first that only referred to the people in the Christian “ulmma” (or the Muslim term for “community”). But over time the Christians determined that this conformity was required among all peoples of the world before God's anger could be mollified and that then, and only then, could Jesus return.

However, it took a while to get there, this global Christian perspective, so we need to go back again to the story line.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and its Foundations

Subsection C - What Happened “in the Beginning”?

Once again, in most of this area during the fall of the Ancients and the Jews and the rise of Christianity, from about 350 BC to 350 AD, the means of “talking” about the various alternatives to the (Roman and Greek) new order could only be stated in religious terms. We must understand that new ideas and concepts were being incorporated into many religious organizations and cults. The very understanding of mankind's relationship to the divine was in flux throughout the “known” world.

Again, the effects of Persian influence in this 750 year time frame are crucial. They include:

- The first introduction in the West of the concept of an afterlife that can be far better than the current world;
- The concept of “the end of times” and a “final judgment”; and
- A democratization of the religions whereby access to the afterlife is extended from the elite to the masses. A new emphasis is placed on the common faithful having an equal (if not better) chance to access to this better after life (Persian and Jewish influence here).
- The first concepts of an overarching evil one, rather than many evil forces, or gods with multiple personalities who could be both good and evil.

We also see the expansion of a universal solely good, solely existing, all knowing, and all powerful God.

At the same time, the Greeks introduced a host of new options critical to Hellenism, based in what we call philosophy, which can not be detailed here.

With all these new ideas, the questions of how to interpret them led to widespread debate and also open hostilities. This often acrimonious environment was not limited to Christians, who were particularly noted for extensive debate and less than civil disagreements, but among almost all kinds of new groups and religions.

The Greeks and Romans were willing to let these new groups exist as long as they did in order to avoid civil disorder and did not challenge the authority of the rulers. Under their civil protection, many groups rose and fell in the “market place of ideas.” And when the debates did get too hostile and violent, the State stepped in (such as with the Council of Nicene, as we will see later.)

The advent of ideas created problems for all the older groups, in how to address the new concepts, and yet preserve their “ways” that came before. I try to word this carefully since the issues went both ways.

- The Ancients were faced with the new “Greek” thinking and philosophies, and had to address these; but the Greeks and Romans were also being offered a whole set of new “world views” that seemed to be at least more interesting and exciting than their traditional religions.

So, in many ways, the interchange was not just one way. Ancient Egyptian cults (like that of Isis) found great acceptance in Rome, and the concepts of worshiping the sun as the primary

god (Sol Invictus) became very popular among many Classicalists, especially the soldiers.

However, the Roman state was in a position of power and able to allow these “diversions” of the people as a form of entertainment. (Although later, the Emperors would try to use these new religions as a basis for obtaining greater power.)

- However, for the repressed peoples, this merger of ideas was ripping at their sense of community, and sense of being a people apart from Rome. It represented a threat to their identity as independent and distinct cultures.

At this time, there were many peoples struggling with these issues, and few texts remain to show what answers were offered (again, the passive approach and the active approach were still in play) However, there was also the intellectual approach of trying to find common ground, allowing for the merger of the ideas, while still maintaining the sense of independence and a community separate from the Romans.

The best known remaining text that explored this approach (other than New Testament and the Christians) is that of Philo of Alexandria. Somehow, despite so much destruction, many of his writings have been preserved. Perhaps this is because his writings seem to be so similar to many of the ideas later developed by the Christians or maybe because the Christians took many of his ideas for their own. In any event, his writings attempted to merge Greek rationalism with Jewish beliefs.

(see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philo_of_Alexandria)

Philo used [allegory](#) to fuse and harmonize [Greek philosophy](#) and [Judaism](#). His method followed the practices of both Jewish [exegesis](#) and [Stoic](#) philosophy. His work was not widely accepted (by either Greeks nor Jews) Philo’s works were enthusiastically received by the early [Christians](#), some of whom saw in him a cryptic Christian. His concept of the [Logos](#) as God’s creative principle apparently influenced early [Christology](#). To him Logos was God’s “blueprint for the world”, a governing plan.

So “in the beginning” the early Christians, like many of the contemporary religious groups they were competing against for adherents, were faced with many different questions on how to create a religion, that could become a player in the market place of ideas, and answer so many of the rival concepts all around them.

- They needed to address many, many aspects of the concepts of both Ancient and Classical worlds that any new “universal” religion had to address.

And with the great logical minds of Greek Classicalism, in the market place of ideas, one answer offered by the early Church, could lead to say, “ten more” questions. Most the early “beginning” controversies that led to accusations of “heresy” were arguments over these points of “logic” For example, if Christ was the Son of God:

- Was he always the son of God, and therefore was he always around from the beginning of time?
- If he was always around, how could he be “begotten?”
- If he was always around was he equal to God, the same as God, like God, or different than God?
- If he was truly a son of God, and the same as God, how could he feel pain?
- If he couldn’t feel pain, how could he “suffer for our sins?”
- Was Jesus really God (or son of God) when he was born, or did God adopt him at the moment of baptism?

And on an on ,,,

Then there were, of course, additional controversies concerning Mary (Did she stay a virgin during her whole life? Since she was the Mother of God, did she, herself, not have to be pure, and also be of virgin birth one free of the sin of sex?)

To a modern reader, a non-Christian, a “liberal Christian”, or one used to the answers of faith given through the Nicene Creed as the answers to these questions and many other explanations developed over hundreds, if not 1,500 years, these questions may seem either unimportant, bizarre or now definitively answered. However, to the founders of a new religion, where religious debate was so important for the cultural and political issues, the answer (or should I say the multiple answers) offered for each of these questions created huge controversies and extensive violence in the later Roman world.

- Most of these issues can be studied and followed in tracing Church history concerning “heresies” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_heresy

For example of a “heresy” we can look at the teachings of Nestorius, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nestorianism#Nestorius> and the subsequent “heretical” religion his teachings created.

- Nestorianism originated in the Church in the 5th century out of an attempt to rationally explain and understand the incarnation of the divine Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity as the man, Jesus Christ. Nestorianism taught that the human and divine essences of Christ are separate and that there are two persons, the man Jesus Christ and the divine Logos, which dwelt in the man. In consequence, Nestorians rejected such terminology as “God suffered” or “God was crucified”, because the humanity of Jesus Christ which suffered is separate from his divinity. Likewise, they rejected the term [Theotokos](#) (Giver of birth to God/Mother of God) as a title of the [Virgin Mary](#), suggesting instead the title [Christotokos](#) (Giver of birth to Christ/Mother of Christ), because in their opinion Mary gave birth to only the human person of Jesus and not the divine. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nestorianism>

Seems to be logical answers to some of the problems, but these answers were not accepted by the “official church”. However, while condemned in the Roman Christian world (Council of Ephesus, 431), and repressed by Emperors, this concept of this type of Christianity actually spread quite rapidly along the trade routes all the way to China. For several hundred years, (before the rise of Islam, and the repression of “foreign ideas” in China around 850 AD), this form of Christianity grew in Asia and had a strong foot hold in China. It continued to have influence in Siberia, Mongolia and China until about the 15th century, but was never a major force outside of a few small areas. It actually continues to day in the “Assyrian Church.”

So the early Christians, in the beginning, had to address the rationalist (and it was a major problem for the Church for centuries). But they had to address the Ancients too. They needed to show how their new answers fit into the construct of the ancient world as well as the Greek concept of the rational world. As noted, almost all the “heresies” relate to the issues of rational explanation of the Christian “universal view.”

There is far less written about how the Christians had to explain and address the Ancients and Classicalist (Sky God) religions, as opposed to the rationalist views and needs to the people “in the beginning.”

- And a study of the church during the period after 250 or so, shows a force, the Church, quickly taking on the forms and the rituals of the existing (Sky God) religion structures with the veneer of “Christ.” (the morphing effect)

Eventually the Pope took on the titles of the most important person in the old Roman religious hierarchy; “Pontifex Maximus” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontifex_Maximus

The **Pontifex Maximus** was the high priest of the [Ancient Roman College of Pontiffs](#). This was the most important position in the [Ancient Roman religion](#), open only to [patricians](#) until 254 BC, when a [plebeian](#) first occupied this post. A distinctly religious office under the early [Roman Republic](#), it gradually became politicized until, beginning with [Augustus](#), it was subsumed into the Imperial office. It was last held by the Christian Roman Emperor [Gratian](#) until the title passed over to the [Bishop of Rome](#).

With this structure the power of the Church escalated greatly; initially through the agreements with Constantine. By binding of the Church to the emperor and taking on the role and lands and wealth of the old pagan worship, the Church became extremely powerful within the state, and extremely wealthy as well.

- Much of the use of the new wealth went into the development of new churches literally covered in gold, with the justification for the excess, given that Heaven is covered in gold and we on earth need to help people have a better image of heaven by creating churches that resemble heaven itself.

We know there was great resistance to the growing power and wealth of the Church among Christians themselves. However, we have little in the way of writing past the time of Constantine through the “beginning period of the “Dark Ages, to show the full nature of dissent concerning the new worldliness of the Church.

- Despite this, we begin to find real opposition to the church as a repository of great wealth, in writings, as early as the 13th century, at which time the Church is described as being non-Christian and in fact the “Anti- Christ (see http://www.christiantrumpetsounding.com/reformation_views.htm)

The language and means of expressing this dissent is in the terms allowed and known at the time, namely, religious expression. So, the Pope is not described as a capitalist blood sucker enemy of the working class, simply because almost none of these concepts had been developed. Rather, the pope is described in the language of the time; he is called the “anti-Christ”

- In [Christian eschatology](#) the **Antichrist** or **Anti-Christ** (literally: [anti](#), opposite, for, or as; [christ](#), [messiah](#)) has come to mean a [person](#), [image](#) of a person, or other [entity](#) that is the [embodiment](#) of [evil](#). The name antichrist derives from the books of 1 and 2 John, which describe any who denies Christ to be antichrists. The term is also often applied to prophecies regarding a “Little horn” power in Daniel 7, and is used in conjunction with many [end times](#) teachings. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist>

In more recent times, (the last 250 years) more focus has been put on the similarities of the early Christians and their “morphing” with “pagan” rituals and motifs. Examples include the placement of the birth of Jesus on the 25th of December (Celebration of Sol Invictus), and

Easter at the time of other ancient ceremonies, as well as the use of the Cross and the dying and resurrecting god story so common in many other ancient religions



From Carthage 400 years before Christ .

The moon image above the “crucifix” is in fact, the symbol of Ba’al

- Again, this history of the Church and its use of the rituals and forms of the Ancients and Classicalists is far too great to go into extensively here.

What I am putting forth here is that “in the beginning” the early Christians needed to provide answers to many different types of questions from many different points of view and they needed all of these answers to make sense. This was very difficult task. As we shall see, what answers the Church could not create through the use of logic and rational explanation, it would eventually provide through the use of force.

- Dissenters became synonymous with heresy; heresy was punishable by excommunication and or death. This was the price for dissent inflicted by the Church, once in power under the Romans, and later, with “Crusades.” The use of force against dissenters in Southern France or the Balkans” and during the Inquisition was massive. The language used in meting out these punishments was not so dissimilar to the “final solution” rhetoric of Germany.

In the beginning, as this Orthodox Church was formulating its dogma, there was still the need to make the “masses” happy by adapting local customs into the process. While other writers and historians have looked at Egyptian, Persian, Greek, (and so many other influences) on how the early Christians addressed these questions of their time concerning their new religion, few have looked at how the Christians answered the needs of the Ba’alist, and Jews of the fourth type, the mixed Jewish/Ba’alist descendants of the remnant Jews not taken into Exile. Since they have not considered the critical importance of this group and its religious culture, few historians have considered how the answers given to this population end up influencing the whole of the new Christian religion.

We know the Roman world was diverse, and we can see many adjustments made to the Christian effort to both merge and morph their major concepts with local religions. However, “in the beginning” they had to address the many types of people in Judea, and just looking at

the composition of the population of Judea at the time shows the diversity of religions and concepts the early Christians had to face and address: The population groups included:

- 1) Jews who based their religion on the changes to Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (and within this Jewish population there were also many divisions, Sadducees, Pharisees ... Etc)
- 2) Greeks - again massively divided between traditional religious, and the mystery cults and a wide range of the philosophical concepts of many including Plato, the Epicureans, the Pythagoreans etc ...
- 3) Romans ... Although actually rather limited in numbers at this point ... They were clearly dominant politically and were having some influence. Generally, the Romans that would have been in close contact with Christians of the day, would have been mainly interested in order and taxes, as opposed to philosophical and religious matters.
- 4) Hellenized Jews who attempted to have feet in both camps (with Philo of Alexandria as their main thinker and writer) - There were actually less of them in this area than one might think. Their base was in Egypt, since the Maccabean (aggressive activist) rule was very much opposed to this philosophy and religious approach. Also, the Hellenized Jews tended to be more concentrated in coastal cities, rather than in the "uplands."
- 5) All-but-Jewish Hellenes— In other words, Greeks who were greatly captivated by the concepts of the Jewish religion, but did not join due to diet and circumcision rites ... Etc
- 6) Remnants of the Phoenicians/Canaanites (Ba'alists) --- while the Greeks did clobber them and depopulated the cities and repopulated many with Greek peoples, there were still significant numbers of Phoenicians and "Ba'alists" especially in the uplands of Phoenicia, a "backwater" of little concern to the Greeks.
- 7) Outsiders --- Peoples who followed Persian religion (Zoroastrianism), with its focus on Dualism and also Egyptian religions (with the very popular Isis cults) just to name a few.
- 8) Outsiders who were Roman soldiers --- people from all over the empire and with wide ranges of religions (tolerated by Rome)

And one group that seems to be mostly forgotten, but was certainly a legitimate group

- 8) The "Jews" who were descendants of those left behind by the Exile. This group was never part of the traditions created in Babylon or the re-write of the Bible in Babylon that supported the "New Jews." This group included the descendants of the people who came to have a religion that was similar to the "remnants." These people were settled in the areas by the Assyrians and Babylonians and then, out of traditional respect for local deities, accepted Yahweh. According to Biblical history both appear to be descendants of the people whose offer to help rebuild the second temple was rejected by Ezra (or Nehemiah?).

These "Jews" actually continued to practice a form of Judaism, or better stated Yahwehism, that was more in line with Ba'alism than it was with Deuteronomy. There's no reason to believe that they were not doing so for centuries after the return of the Exile Jews ... in the uplands out of control of the Nehemiah colony of Judea, amidst a dominant Greek/Roman presence. The people were the ones forced converted to the Judaism of the "returnees"

during the Maccabean ruler about 100 BC. So in relative time, their “old time” religion was still fresh in memory if not practice during the time of Jesus.

- (Again, many were not direct descendants of the remnant “Jews” not taken into exile, but were the progeny of peoples brought into the area by Assyrians and Babylonians who had accepted Yahweh as the chief god of the land (as was traditional) and mixed in Yahwehism with their traditional worship.)

And these non- returnee “Jews” or Ba’alist/Yahwehist Jews never accepted or took as valid the claim that the “returnees” represented the promise of God, or a second covenant in which God promised to bring back the remnants and give them the land forever (as in Jeremiah and other prophets of the time). They clearly were not part of the covenant, or the process that led to the promise.

- And in looking at the issues of their time, from their perspective, the one glaring area for which this Ba’alist/Yahwhist Jewish population sought justification was the concept of sacrificing a son in time of crisis to God. Early on in the Christian effort, very early on, almost one of the first concepts offered by the Christians was aimed at this group, (not the new Jews, the returnee Jews who so rejected the concepts of human sacrifice) and the message given to this older group was clear, Christians base their religion on the concept of the sacrifice of the only begotten son..

So, while the Christians offered the New Jews the claim that Christ was the Messiah, to the “remnant Jews,” the Jews oppressed by the Returnee Jews and the Greeks and the Romans, the Christians offered Christ as the human sacrifice of the first born son (of God).

The “returnee” Jews never accepted the concept of Jesus as a son of God, in large part because the “story of Jesus” seemed to closely related to the message of Ba’alism. This concept of the need for sacrifice was what the returnee Jews had worked so hard to purge from their religion (as they saw that concept as the very reason for God's destruction of the first temple; I am not alone in recognizing this conflict of the Jews of the time and the ideas of Christianity:

- In fact, it was partly that passion for monotheism that arose from the purge of Ba’al worship from their corporate consciousness that caused Judaism to have problems accepting Jesus as the Son of God. For many faithful Jews, that sounded too much like a return to a polytheistic syncretism. That was one lesson that they had learned well. <http://www.crivoice.org/baal.html>

However, the non-returnee Jews still seem to have clung to the older concepts of Yahweh/Ba’al worship and the Christians tried to attract them with the message of “god sacrificed his only begotten son.” At the same time, they tried to attract the Returnee Jews by calling Christ the new Messiah, focused not on this world, but on the next.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and its Foundations

Subsection D The Meaning of the Book of Hebrews?

While I am constantly saddened over the lack of documentation to support our knowledge of the ancient world, there is perhaps a clear document that supports the premise of this work. It is in fact in the Christian Bible, the *Book of Hebrews*. This book has been described as the book of the Bible which “may have been the most profound book written in the New Testament period.” In addition it has been stated that:

- It is also one of the most difficult books for modern people to understand.”
<http://www.cresourcei.org/biblestudy/bbheb1.html> .

However, if we look at the book as one designed to address this remnant Yahwehist/Ba’alist population and written in from the perspective of “morphing” religious thought, perhaps this book is not so difficult to understand, and its effort at morphing the old religion to new terms makes the message of the book clear.

At this time, I am not aware of any other researchers who have considered this approach to understanding Hebrews, and so many Christian readers find the message difficult to understand.

According to **Roger Hahn** PhD in Biblical Studies - Professor of New Testament and Academic Dean at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri;

- The traditional method by which modern Biblical scholarship studies a book leads to frequent frustration for those studying *Hebrews*. Normally, a student seeks to learn all that can be determined about the author, the date, the place of writing, the audience, the literary form, and the purpose of the book. Most of these areas lead scholars to dead ends. <http://www.cresourcei.org/biblestudy/bbheb1.html>

According to Wikipedia;

- The author of *Hebrews* is not known. The text as it has been passed down to the present time is internally anonymous, though ancient title headings often attribute it to the Apostle Paul. However, even in antiquity doubts were raised about Paul’s alleged authorship http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews

However, almost all agree, that *Hebrews* is appears to be targeted and designed for a specific group and for a specific purpose.

- *Hebrews* is often erroneously named as one of the [general \(or catholic\) epistles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews). But since it was written to a specific group of Jewish-Christians, it is not technically a general epistle. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews

And from the statement presented above the “traditional view is that it was intended for the supposed Jewish-Christians that were supposed to exist in the first era between the time of

Christ (again, if Christ existed at all) and some time between the two revolts 70-135 AD

- Traditional scholars have argued the letter's audience was [Jewish Christians](#), as early as the end of the second century (hence its title, "*The Epistle to the Hebrews*").

Others place the writing of *Hebrews* earlier in time:

- There is no textual evidence that the New Testament authors had knowledge of the destruction of the [Second Temple](#) by the Romans in 70. The use of tabernacle terminology in *Hebrews* has been used to date the epistle before the [destruction of the temple](#), the idea being that knowing about the destruction of both Jerusalem and the temple would have influenced the development of his overall argument to include such evidence. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews

People also see this book as part of the debate to answer one of the critical questions of the early Christian times; can you be a good Christian and not have to follow all 613 commandments of the Jews?

Hebrews is part of an internal New Testament debate between the extreme "Judaizers" (who argued that non-Jews must convert to Judaism before they can receive the Holy Spirit of Jesus' Jewish covenant) versus the extreme "lawless ones" (who argued that Jews must reject God's commandments and that God's eternal Torah was no longer in effect). Peter and Paul represent the moderates of each faction, respectively.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Hebrews

According to the Wikipedia writings on *Hebrews*,

- The Epistle emphasizes non-Jewish followers of Jesus do not need to convert to Judaism to share in all of God's promises to Jews.

However, we see that *Hebrews* really does not fit into most of the general writings of the New Testament, in style, as well as in content.

- *Hebrews* does not fit the form of a traditional [Hellenistic epistle](#), lacking a proper prescript.
- *Hebrews* contains many references to the [Old Testament](#)—specifically to its [Septuagint](#) text. It has been regarded as a kind of commentary on the book of [Leviticus](#) and [Temple](#) worship in general

So, the book is not aimed at the Greeks, steeped in logic; nor at the Romans and their Sky Gods; and in fact, if read well, it is not aimed at the Jews (who were strongly attached to their 613 commandments).

The very use of the term "Hebrews" rather than "Jews" is quite curious, since the term "Hebrew" had long gone out of fashion, and the term "Jew" had been in popular use for almost 300 years at the time of Christ

- Although a variation of the term was used to refer to the tribe of Judah, and later the people who lived in the Kingdom of Judea, the term "Jew" only came into use to

describe the religious followers of Yahweh some time in the 4th Century BC, and was used primarily by those who had returned from Exile.

- In [Hebrew](#), the name "Judah" (יהודה) contains the four letters of the [Tetragrammaton](#) — the special, holy, and ineffable name of the [Jewish God](#). The very holiness of the name of Judah attests to its importance as an alternate name for "[Israelites](#)" that it ultimately replaces.
- The [Book of Esther](#) is agreed to be the place where the word Jew is used. The name is believed to come for "Yehud," the [Persian](#) name for [Judea](#). The adding of the *Yud* at the end of the word signifies a "Resident of the land of Judea." The name appears in the Bible in a verb form, in [Esther 8:17 \[2\]](#) which states, *Many of the people of the land "mityahadim - became Yehudim/Judeans/Jews" because the fear of the Yehudim fell on them.*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology_of_the_word_Jew

Also see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Esther and <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/whojew1.html>

The term "Jew" was obviously not unknown to the early Christian writers, in fact, in the New Testament the term is used almost 200 times.

- So for the 200 times, the words: "Jew, Jews, and Jewish" is used in the New Testament, <http://www.israelect.com/reference/WillieMartin/OriginoftheWordJew.htm>

In addition, the Christians did not use the term "Hebrews" to refer to themselves

- The NT never calls them such (Hebrews). Further, Eph 2:12-14 teaches that Christians are part of the "commonwealth of Israel." <http://www.bible.ca/d-christians-are-hebrews-etymology.htm>

So why in this book, this epistle, or sermon, (or what ever the original format of this work represented) was the intended population, the targeted group called "Hebrews?"

Lets again quickly review, that for some 400 years prior to Jesus, there were are least four major tendencies and groups among the followers of Yahweh, and this is not the traditional concepts of Zealot, Sadducees, Pharisees; these groups were actually only a subset of one of the groups. The four groups were designated by their relationship to the Babylonian exile.

These groups were:

1. The Jews of Egypt (those who went into Exile before or just after the invasions). There were many Jews of the first group in Egypt as well, but they differed from the third group.
2. The Jews of Babylon
3. The Returnee (or the dominant group in Judea, at least after the successful revolt against the Greeks
4. The remnant peoples (Hebrews/Israelites) who lived on in Judea and Israel under Assyrian and Babylonian rule, and who had become supplemented in numbers by "converts" or at least "honorers" of Yahweh by those peoples settled on the land by the Assyrians and Babylonians. (As we saw in Ezra)

The second and third groups had clearly attempted to purge themselves from the “acts” that had caused the failure of the first Jewish Commonwealth, and followed the 613 commandments, and were great greatly abhorred anything that smacked of human sacrifice (but seemingly still lusted after them foreign women).

The first and fourth groups were far less influenced by the Exile, and still practiced a form of Judaism that were more closely aligned with the older Ba’alist influenced religion of the “Israelites.”

- And the fourth group clearly had been force converted to the third type of Judaism roughly 100 years before the dates given for the birth of Christ.

Despite some Roman “penetration into the areas where this fourth group mainly existed There seemed to be little influence from Roman and Greek culture, since it was relatively remote (Sea of Galilee) and mostly poor.

- It also appears that Paul may have been, in fact, from this group of peoples whose alliance to the Exile Judaism was relatively new (seeing that Paul came from an area that was part of the area that had been force converted. We don’t know enough of his ancestry to make any kind of definitive statement on that possibility.)

Taking these facts into account, we maybe able to get a far better understanding of who was the target audience and the intended message for *Hebrews*.

So, if the message is was not intended for “Christian/Jews”, but the remnant Yahwehist/Ba’alist, the fourth type of Jew; with this understanding, the term “Hebrew” makes sense. The title of the book actually is harkening back to the people’s religion, prior to the forced conversion, to the form of Judaism, or Yahwehism that was more based on the concepts of Ba’al than on the concepts of Deuteronomy. In this interpretation, *Hebrews* was an appeal to the descendants of the peoples who meet the returnees with defiance and those rejected in their offer to help build the new Temple, the remnants of Israel and Judah left behind by the great conquests and exiles; the people with a religion (or a history of the religion) which still accepted the necessity of human sacrifice.

So following this logic, we can say, the book was really intended for the “Hebrews” and not the “Jews”.

Also, by understanding that these people still existed at the time of the early Church, and were still clinging to their culture, Paul’s claimed to be a “Hebrew” in other books of the New Testament also makes more sense ...

2 Corinthians 11:22

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. (No mention of Moses – only the ones who worshiped god as El)

Philippians 3

4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew

of Hebrews; ... (He does not claim the title Jew)

Since Paul, by this time and as stated in Acts, had clearly broken with the religion of the Exile and the rules of that religion, and their concept of the (Ezra) second covenant ... He too is saying he is from the real descendants of God worshipers, not the Babylonian returnees; not a Jew as thought of at the time ... But a Hebrew ... (or descendant of the non-Exile Jews)

- In some ways ... this use of the term Hebrew vs. Jew, is something like the modern example of African slaves in America who went from being called Negroes to Blacks to “African Americans” The later term, African American, clearly links this group culturally and historically to a time, in the distant past, when they saw themselves as a free and powerful people, rather than the terms that only focused on the color of the skin, and a their minority status in a white dominated country.
- Paul, and this letter to the “Hebrews’ is also trying to link these Remnant peoples to a time before the Exile when they saw the religion as more “pure and direct” and not convoluted by the 613 rules, etc. Paul and early Christian thinkers seem to reject or at least limit the commandments down to ten.

Other “mystery” of this book of *Hebrews* is that the type of text in this book differs from the other books of the Bible in that *Hebrews* puts a much greater focus on the actual act of sacrifice of Jesus, a concept so important to the Remnant Jews.

- In *Hebrews* we read that this sacrifice of Jesus is the last sacrifice needed, and that none other is needed. But we also read that what is needed for God, is the human sacrifice, not just the sacrifice of animals, and
- That the human sacrifice of Jesus was what was needed to establish the new covenant with God, as was the tradition of these people, the Hebrews (but no longer of the Jews).
- Also, in *Hebrews* we read that this is the second covenant, in effect denying the previous second covenant claimed by the Returnees (saying that putting into effect the 613 commandments, and building the second temple enabled the second covenant), This book is denying that God had returned the land to the Jews, through the Messiah Cyrus, and it also denies God’s promise that the land would never be taken away again. In short, this book apparently rejects the pretense of the Second Jewish Commonwealth - the state and the religion of the Returnees.

All the references to this agreement found in the later prophets of the Returnees are not present at all in *Hebrews*. Therefore, the writers of this work were aiming at those who were not connected to this second covenant, or, were only force converted to the precepts of the view a very short time beforehand, almost in living memory for many.

The text of the book clearly establishes that the sacrifice of the son of God was needed to create the covenant, and create the new religion, based on this new agreement with God. This new agreement is sealed with a human sacrifice, so needed in all contracts with God, a style of creating contracts with God so well connected to this religious point of view (the remnants and the remaining Ba’alists), and so strongly rejected by Returnee Jews.

As we have seen, this “sacrifice” of Jesus was based on established religious traditions at the time of Jesus, and these traditions were at least 6000 years old (as we saw with the

Phoenician king who dressed his son up as king and then sacrificed him). Therefore, the statements that seem to befuddle so many traditional historians, seem within this context to be clear

- The ten chapters of *Hebrews* clearly present a vision of Christianity as the natural continuation of the Ba'al/Yahwehist traditions.

In Chapter I, Jesus is virtually described in the same means as Ba'al in the Canaanite stories, of being seated on the Right hand of God (El) and

In Chapter II Jesus takes on the traditional role in the Ba'alist religion of the High Priest ready to do sacrifice for the sins of people.

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Also, here, the descendant is measured from Abraham, not from the children of Moses (due to the rejection of Deuteronomy, which is the laws of Moses.) This interpretation is based on the understanding that Abraham worshiped El, not Yahweh.

In fact, in Chapter 3 we are told directly that Jesus is greater than Moses

7. 4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. 5 Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. 6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house.

Therefore, the early Christians are implying that the rules set down by Moses (613) are inferior and not needed.

8. Chapter Four states again Jesus is the most high priest (while also confirming that, while not all 613 commandments are needed, keeping a day of rest is okay).

Chapter 5 continues the theme of Jesus being the high priest selected by God to deal with the sins of the people.

What is interesting is that in the midst of this work there appears to be a section that lays the foundation for support of a Gnostic view of the Bible and of this book.

9. 11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

- The Gnostics all claimed there was a "higher truth" that would not be "knowable" by most people, a secret meaning to the words and stories of Jesus. Here in

Hebrews it seems that this is also being said (the “solid food” is the real meaning)

Chapter 6 again continues the theme of Jesus as the chief priest

20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

But we also have reference to Aaron and the Levites, who actually represented the religion of the people not taken into Exile (the religion denounced by the prophets).

And, the writer begs the readers to be patient, just like Abraham, because God fulfills his promises in his own time.

In Chapter 7 we start to get to the meat of the message, explaining why it is important that Jesus is seen as the High Priest (and it is important that we understand the role of the high priest in the tradition Sky God type of religion; those responsible for the sacrificing process) The high priest, through the sacrifice process was asking the god to intercede for the person, or to make God as the witness and overseer of any bargains created and sworn to by the partners (the second and third “types of sacrifices” discussed earlier). Jesus is presented here as not just the high priest, but a different type of one, the ultimate and final high priest.

10.23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

And his sacrifice takes on a different role than the ritual sacrifices of other high priests; his sacrifice is the final one that is needed.

11.26 Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Chapter 8 again reconfirms that Jesus is greater than Moses, and that the first covenant is broken and the second is needed (ignoring the covenant of the Exiles).

12. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain. 6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

13.7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But God found fault with the people and said
“The time is coming, declares the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.

12 For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”

13 By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is
obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Here again, this reference ignores the new covenant referred to by Ezra and Nehemiah based on the return from Exile (and Cyrus as the Messiah). In *Hebrews* the Christians press forward to say that their new covenant proves the Jews (of the Exile and Return) to be wrong, that God did not make a new covenant with them, and that only the covenant with Abraham and renewed again with Moses had existed. They are indicating that now a new covenant, a superior one, is being made with the true upholders of the descendants of Abraham, the “Hebrews.”

In Chapter 9 we see that the sacrifice of animals alone, the point of view of the Exiles, or the Jews, is not enough, what is needed is the blood of the son, which was the belief of the Hebrews/Canaanites/Israelites.

11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

And it is this blood, the blood of the beloved son, that allows for the new covenant to be sealed (as with all of the contracts in this old religion of El/Ba'al)

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

And without death, without blood, there is no binding deal.

16 In the case of a will it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, 17 because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.

18 This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19 When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. 20 He said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.”

22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

23 It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

However, with Jesus, there was no more need for additional human sacrifice, since the final, yet ever living one was sacrificed.

25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

In Chapter 10 we can clearly see the conflict set up by the writers, for both the rejection of the Jewish (Returnee) view of the world on the one hand, and the support for the world view of the "*Hebrews*" on the other. We see here that the early Christians were saying that there was the need of the sacrifice of the son, and that was missing from the first agreement which was why the "first covenant" failed.

Here *Deuteronomy* (the law), the chief weapon of the Returnees" is almost denounced and that the rituals of the Returnees are almost useless.

1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

The writer is saying that the Jewish (the Returnees) approach to sacrifice has been shown to be a failure

3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The writer quotes Christ in saying that the sacrifice of animals alone is not enough, even though it is the Jews' (Returnee) law that requires it.

5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;

6 with burnt offerings and sin offerings
you were not pleased.

8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made).

Then the writer, again quoting Christ, says what God needs is the human sacrifice, the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ.

9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And again this is the final human sacrifice needed ...

11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Chapter 10 now sets out severe punishment for those who have learned of Jesus and the new covenant and decide to reject it.

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Chapter 11 traces the history of the "Hebrews" saying the religious peoples were always driven by "faith" to act in certain ways, even if it seemed contrary to "nature" or other promises

- 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

What supports the premise that *Hebrews* was not intended for Jews (or the Returnees) is that the chapter never talks about the ending of the Jewish states and that possibility that by "faith," the people were preserved in Exile, and the city reestablished. None of these areas were of concern to the "remnant" Hebrews, but only the Jews of the Exile and the Return (who already had a second covenant).

Much of Chapter 12 is a plea to stay faithful despite opposition and ridicule. But the chapter goes on to again talk of the blood of Jesus and the fire of God.

22 You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. ...

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our “God is a consuming fire.” (Or quite like the description of the idol of Ba’al or Moloch, that received the child sacrificed in a “consuming fire.”)

It is interesting to note the reference to the “church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven”. Is this again a reference to only the first born of God, or to the entire first born, who had been sacrificed over the centuries to God?

The book ends in the 13th chapter with additional pleas to follow the teaching and the directives of the leaders and to obey them. There are also statements on “good behavior” concerning marriage (and making reference to some one name Timothy who had just been released from jail) and avoidance of the “market place of ideas.”

9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. 10 We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you

However again, in part of the closing, there is again reference to the concepts of the blood of Jesus.

11 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

By the way, *Hebrews* also would appeal to the remnant of the Phoenicians in the area since the first Chapter clearly makes Jesus sound like the Ba’al of the ancient Phoenician religion (which greatly influenced the old style Yahwehist religion). It refers back to the critical fight between Ba’al and Mot (Death) and Ba’al’s eventual triumph over death (and remember, Ba’al is both a particular god and also the title meaning “Lord”, so Lord Jesus can be stated as Ba’al Jesus). Saying we put trust in the Lord, is in a sense saying “In Ba’al we trust..” Also, as we have seen, the Phoenicians believed that human sacrifice was needed to “seal the deal” with God .and such is stated in so many words in *Hebrews*.

Therefore *Hebrews* have elements that are attractive to both of these Hebrew and Phoenician groups. The book is basically saying:

Hey, your views of the past were correct (unlike the Returnees who were saying that these views were an Abomination to God ... And punishable by death) But now with Jesus ... There is a new covenant based on your concepts, and Jesus’ sacrifice seals the deal like

you need the deal sealed ... So you're now free to join us ... And obtain salvation without rejecting your beliefs of the past, and also without the need for any more human sacrifice.

So, if we read the book in this light, looking at all the various populations with all their various beliefs, that the early church addresses, the name "Hebrews" makes sense, and the critical elements in the book (which are not always considered understandable nor in line with some of other writings in the New Testament) and the purposes of the book seem far clearer.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and Its Foundations

Subsection E - Christ as a Human Sacrifice

What makes *Hebrews* so difficult for many modern readers is the direct reference to Christ as a “sacrifice” that ended the need for other sacrifices. The official Roman Church position is that there is no relationship between the death of Christ and a human sacrifice. The basic logic offered by the Church for why it was not a human sacrifice is that Jesus was not human, and therefore it could not be a “human” sacrifice.

- The Roman Church defense concerning this is quite lengthy and can be found at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13407a.htm>
- The victims offered by the ancient [priests](#) were either lifeless things or, at best, irrational animals distinct from the [person](#) of the offerer; Christ offers a victim included in the [person](#) of the offerer. His living human flesh, animated by His rational [soul](#), a real and worthy substitute for [mankind](#), on whose behalf Christ offers the sacrifice.
- The Aaronic [priest](#) inflicted an irreparable death on the victim which his sacrificial [intention](#) changed into a religious [rite](#) or symbol; in [Christ's](#) sacrifice the immutation of the victim is brought about by an internal act of His will ([John 10:17](#)), and the victim's death is the source of a new life to himself and to [mankind](#). Besides, [Christ's](#) sacrifice, being that of a Divine [person](#), carries its own [acceptance](#) with it; it is as much of a [gift of God](#) to [man](#), as a sacrifice of [man](#) to [God](#).

The concept presented (or at least condensed for Christians then and now) is that Christ died for the sins of human kind, and through that death salvation for all was possible and since Christ was divine, no one really died.

The standard text to explain this concept is John 3:16-18

For God so loved the world, that he gave ***his only Son (ton huion ton monogenee)***, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name ***of the only Son of God (tou monogenous tou huio tou theou)***.”

According to Wikipedia, John 3-16-18 “has been called the “Bible in a nutshell” because; it is considered a summary of some of the most central doctrines of traditional Christianity” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_3:16 . This is also the quote that the “rainbow hair guy” has been waving into the cameras of sporting events in the US for decades.

While Wikipedia offers more than two dozen translations of the quote, the core element of each of the variations remain the same: The belief in Jesus as the Son of God leads to the salvation. This is simplicity at its best.

Though the overt statement about sacrifice of *Hebrews* is not present in *John*, it is implied later. For *John* goes on to say,

1 John 4:9-10, 14-15

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent **his only Son (ton huion autou ton monogenee)** into the world, **so that we might live through him**. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us **and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins**... And we have seen and testify **that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world**. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

So it is not just the act of God and his love that leads to salvation, it is the fact that Christ died, and through Christ's death there is the opening for salvation. We find this allusion in:

1 Cor. 15:3-7

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins.

Therefore, Christianity taught that through the death of Jesus, the sins of the world could be wiped away (and, if not sins of all the world, at least the sins of the individual).

- But the question of “how” Christ dies, during the development of the Church, had to be approached in several different ways to address the several different audiences of the early church.

From *Hebrews*, we can see that for the non-exile Jews, the death of Christ was not so much to please God, but a means to seal the deal on the new covenant. However, it appears that at the time many, if not most of the early Christians, who were not of Jewish descent, saw this death of Christ as an actual human sacrifice to please God. Here is where we began to really morph into the Phoenician world view, and a major conflict with the Jews of the time.

- This God with bloody hands has his priests repeat the bloody sacrifice of atonement ... for all Christians the core of Christianity. ... The idea that one should sacrifice to God the dearest thing of all, namely, human life, is as alive among Christians as it was among pagans. Ernst Bloch described the ... this central Christian tenet: “But the ultimate source of the doctrine of sacrificial death is not only particularly bloody, but also particularly archaic.- It derives from the most ancient form of sacrifice, the kind so long avoided, human sacrifice.... “ (Ranke-Heinmann 1992 291)....

“As far as sacrificing one's own children goes, however, an interesting shift takes place in Christianity: Pre-Christian (child sacrifice) stories turn into the good news of Christianity: God sacrifices his first-born, only Son. From the Christian standpoint, the joyous new feature of this teaching is supposed to be this: God sacrifices his Son not for his own advantage, but for ours. Thus he is seeking nothing for himself but for humanity. The most that man ever did for God is what God now does for man. In Christian terms this is also called grace. In the Old Testament the story of the binding of Isaac is told to show that God rejects child sacrifice (a ram is sacrificed instead of Isaac). But in the New Testament, God slaughters his own Son instead of a lamb, and Abraham is seen as the precursor of such filicide.

<http://www.dhushara.com/book/orsin/decalog.htm>

In addition, it is important to understand that the concept of “sacrifice” was not ended with the

death and resurrection of Christ, or the foundation of a new church. Quite to the contrary, the process of sacrifice, the ancient concepts of what was needed to please God was continued without a new human or animal needed.

In the [Roman Catholic Church](#), the [Eastern Orthodox Churches](#), as well as among some [High Church](#) Anglicans, the [Eucharist](#) or Mass is seen as a sacrifice. It is however, not a separate or additional sacrifice to that Christ on the Cross; it is rather the exact same sacrifice, which transcends time and space (“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”) (Rev. 13:8), renewed and made present, the only distinction being that it is offered in an un-bloody manner.

The sacrifice is made present without Christ dying or being crucified again; it is a re-presentation to God, of the “once and for all” sacrifice of Calvary by the now risen Christ, who continues to offer himself and what he has done on the Cross as an oblation to the Father. The complete identification of the Mass with the sacrifice of the Cross is found in Christ’s words at the last supper over the bread and wine: “This is my body, which is given up for you,” and “This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed unto the forgiveness of sins.” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacrifice>

Since it was traditional for all persons in the community to eat of the sacrificial animal (one of the few times when peoples in the ancient world could eat meat), the idea of eating of the body and drinking of the blood of Christ at the Mass, continues these very ancient traditions, morphed into another form.

There was a need to justify this concept of eating the Lord (a human) rather than eating the goat, lamb or other animal sacrificed. Even with explanation it was difficult to understand, based in the traditions concerning sacrifice.

[John 6:52-53](#), “The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? ⁵³ Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.’”

The full battle raged within the Church for almost its entire existence involves the issue of “transubstantiation” and if the body and blood of Christ is actually present in the Mass or not. (Please see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transubstantiation>) and like so much else, this debate is beyond the scope of this book.

It took perhaps some 1000 to 1400 years for the Reformation to develop a challenge to some of the core concepts of the Roman Church. How to view the Mass was a key component of this challenge.

Most Protestants reject the idea of the [Eucharist](#) as a sacrifice, inclining to see it as merely a holy meal (even if they believe in a form of the [real presence](#) of Christ in the bread and wine, as [Lutherans](#) do). ... Since the word ‘priest’ carries heavy connotations of ‘one who offers sacrifice’, Protestants usually do not use it for their clergy. Evangelical Protestantism emphasizes the importance of a decision to consciously, personally accept Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross as atonement for one’s individual sins if one is to be saved - this is known as ‘accepting Christ as one’s personal Lord and savior.’

And while the Roman Church rejects the concept of Christ as a human sacrifice, at least in some of the Evangelical churches we see a different view.

The later “church fathers” of the time of the 4th and 5th centuries worked to eliminate this concept of Christ as a human sacrifice. Their arguments mainly were along the line that this “act” of Jesus, and God, was not a “sacrifice” and especially not as a “human sacrifice.” They reasserted the belief that Jesus is not human – he is God, part of the Trinity of Godhead, and therefore, his crucifixion can not be considered a human sacrifice.

- In addition, God and Christ knew, what would happen, and that Christ would rise on the third day and ascend to heaven, therefore he was not really dying, but only going through the motions to take on the pain of the world. This process enabled him to take away all sin and yet conquer death itself. (The conquest of death is a recurring theme in the ancient dying and rising Gods of the Near East.)

However, the arguments of the “church fathers” and later Christians were not completely successful then, or now. Throughout the entire history of the “Church” there were major controversies on the nature of Christ, and if he in fact died on the cross or not. If he had died, how should that act be interpreted?

- Even within the Church itself, there are those who see the death of Christ as the fulfillment of the action of Abraham and Isaac where God stopped the process of the child sacrifice. In Jesus, the process of the sacrifice was completed. This completion of the “bonding of contract” by sacrifice of the child is an ancient Phoenician ritual and closely associated with Ba’al.

Many early Christians saw the sacrifice, and some modern Christians continue to see the “sacrifice of Jesus” as a necessary fulfillment of the non-sacrifice of Isaac, the son of Abraham. We can see the continuation of this belief in the following example taken from an on-line “fundamentalist” site:

- God twice praises Abraham’s faithfulness - “You did not withhold from me your own beloved son” (see [Genesis 22:12,15](#)). St. Paul cites the Greek translation of these exact words when He talks about the Crucifixion - “He who did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all...” (see [Romans 8:32](#)). We can also hear an echo of God’s praise in the famous Scripture from the Gospel of John: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...” (see [John 3:16](#)).

And there are other, more subtle, parallels, as well: For instance, the mountain where God tells Abraham to perform the sacrifice: Mount Moriah is in the same place that Melchizedek came from - Salem. ... Calvary, where Jesus was crucified, is one of the hills of Moriah. And as Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice, and submitted to being bound to the wood, so too will Jesus carry His cross and let men bind Him to it. Jewish tradition believed that Isaac was between 27 and 35 at the time of this event and that he willingly allowed himself to be bound and offered by Abraham. This would suggest an even further parallel between Isaac and Jesus - both giving them self up, freely accepting their own death as an offering to God.

http://www.salvationhistory.com/online/intermediate/class1_lesson3_1.cfm

And as we see in other sites, fundamentalist or Pentecostal Christians tend to be more direct

in saying that Jesus was a direct sacrifice to fulfill what was denied by Isaac's non-sacrifice.

- Besides being the only begotten Son of the Most High, a position which itself is of inestimable worth, **Yeshua is the Lamb of God!** He is Yahweh's sacrifice for sin. He alone can take away your sins, my sins and the sins of the entire world.
- To demonstrate the plan of salvation the animal sacrificial system of the Old Testament was designed. It was to be a model, the type, a living drama, an object lesson, a spiritual blueprint of the reality to come. ... To obtain forgiveness for sin, the sinner was to take the blood of a sacrifice, confess his/her sins over it and forgiveness was granted. Before Calvary this forgiveness was provisional: after Calvary it was guaranteed.
- When the Savior, the real **Lamb of God**, sacrificed his life he paid the price for your sins and mine. Our forgiveness, our salvation, our redemption, our inheritance was assured. http://www.answering-christianity.com/son_of_god.htm
<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/SBS777/snotes/note0902.html>

It is clear in the minds of this type of Christian that animal sacrifice is not sufficient to meet the need of God. Therefore, the substitution of a ram for Isaac did not, in fact, complete the covenant, and only through the sacrifice of Jesus, a man, the beloved first son, could God's covenant be assured and the "deal sealed."

- In observance of their Law, the Jews continued to shed the blood of an animal each time they offered a sacrifice to God. Jesus, however, fulfilled the whole of the Law as He offered His own body as the eternal sacrificial offering.
- The Jews offered sacrifices continually, changing their priests time and again, but now Jesus, the eternal high priest, has dealt with our sins by offering Himself once for all. All we have to do is believe this fact.
<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/SBS777/snotes/note0902.html>

We have to be clear, that concepts evolved over a great period of time, and this Reformation concept came into more complete pronouncement during the five hundred years of the Reformation. However, the general concept of Christ being a sacrifice to God was also a major component of the Roman Church, or Western Orthodoxy.

- The Mass is a process of sacrifice
- The blood and body of the sacrificial entity is eaten by the community (as with the other sacrificial rites)
- The head of the process is the priest (as with the ancient process).

Perhaps most important to this point in this book, we have been able to show that the religious concept of the first born son being sacrificed, especially in time of crisis, was part of the religion of the Phoenicians/Canaanites, and was adopted into the religion of the Hebrew/Israelites/Judeans. Furthermore, this practice was carried on extensively prior to the Babylonian Exile.

- As we have discussed, this religious concept was greatly rejected by the Jews of the

Exile and the returnees. However, with the early Christians, we seem to see its return.

As just noted, Christians defined this act by which the Son of God is the “propitiation for our sins” as an act of “sacrifice.” The New Testament seems to have no confusion about the act being a sacrifice; as seen in *Hebrews*

Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (*Hebrews 9:25-26*)

Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he conquered death, and that through this sacrifice all persons could eventually conquer death

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. (*John 5:24-25*)

Here is the tale of Ba'al overcoming “Mot”, death, as told in the Ba'al legends, but with an added dimension of “democracy” in that all people can benefit directly by this, “Ba'al's success” (this lord's, this Christ's success).

Clearly, the morphing of the traditional belief of the Ancient and Classical world into this new religion can also be seen in the story of what is supposed to have happened to Jesus after death (or better put, after overcoming death). After the sacrifice, he duplicated the role of so many other ancient gods, including the god Ba'al, and becomes the “gatekeeper” to heaven, the one whom you have to please to gain “the eternal” ...

It says here that “He ever liveth.” Even now, Jesus is at the right hand of God, making intercession for our sin. We can always confess before the Lord the sins that stain our lives from day to day, and God has promised us through the Holy Spirit that this is all we need to do.

But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. (*Hebrews 7:24-25*)

By which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ one for all, but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God (*Hebrews 10:10-12*)

This appears to be the morphing of the traditional role of a “death and rising god” into the new son of god, this new Christ (but remarkably like the old Ba'al).

There is also a strong reference to the “sacrifice” of Jesus in the Nicene Creed, the statement of belief of the Christian Church since the mid 4th century. Embedded in the Creed is that phrase - “... and was crucified also for us.”

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

<http://www.creeds.net/ancient/nicene.htm>

In other words, the sins of the world were put upon Jesus and the death of Jesus gave the individual the means to rid himself of the consequences of sin.

As with all things religious, the interpretation of the Creed led to fighting within the faithful, including the “Arian Heresy” that almost destroyed the “Orthodox Church.” The controversies over the Creed continued for centuries, eventually leading to the split between the Western and Eastern Church in the 11th Century, in large part over the inclusion of the word “son.”

(the [Filioque clause](#)) were added to the description of the Holy Spirit, in what many have argued is a violation of the Canons of the Third Ecumenical Council”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed#The_Filioque_controversy

It should be remembered that when first produced, the Creed was mostly rejected by the Church bishops, and it took some sixty-five years of fighting and “word smithing” to bring about the creed known today and to gain a somewhat forced acceptance (forced by the Christian Emperors, looking to end the recurring violence created by the internal Christian fighting).

But we seem to have a collective idea that the Creed was accepted and had a universal belief during the later Roman Empire and through the Christian age. This also is simply untrue and is part of the overall propaganda campaign of the Christian Church that will be discussed in more detail later.

- What we have generally been led to believe, in the history that given to us, is the perception that there was a period of a “unified” church based on the Creed. In fact, no such period really ever existed.

As with the case of disagreement over the Creed, within the various denominations of Christianity there are many versions of what one needs to do to gain this ever lasting grace, to be able to conquer death, to obtain salvation and to wash away sins. However, the heart of almost all the denominations’ dogma, is the belief in the impact of the sacrifice and agony of Jesus, and its role in relationship to sin. At its core, Christianity seems to be a morphed version of the repressed religion of “Ba’alism,” restated in different terms to be more

acceptable to the “market place of ideas” of the time.

Part IV – The Clash Of Cultures And Its Impact On Religion

Section V – Christianity and Its Foundations

Subsection F - Did Christianity Arise from the Jews?

One of the great cultural myths that we have heard often in the United States is that we are a people founded in a “Judeo-Christian” tradition. However, while the Church and many in the West continue to speak of the “Judeo-Christian” traditions, there seems little to justify that concept, other than the Church’s effort to gain some legitimacy by attaching the Old Testament (with radical interpretations of its meaning) to the new religion. As in most cultural myths, there is some truth in this, but not as much as people assume:

- For scholars of American religion,” Newsweek states, “the idea of a single Judeo-Christian tradition is a made-in-America myth that many of them no longer regard as valid.” It quotes eminent Talmudic scholar Jacob Neusner: “Theologically and historically, there is no such thing as the Judeo-Christian tradition. It’s a secular myth favored by people who are not really believers themselves.”

Newsweek cites authorities who indicate that “the idea of a common Judeo-Christian tradition first surfaced at the end of the 19th century but did not gain popular support until the 1940s, as part of an American reaction to sm . . .,” and concludes that, “Since then, both Jewish and Christian scholars have come to recognize that—geopolitics apart—Judaism and Christianity are different, even rival religions.”

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article4803.htm> also see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Christian>

To look at the basis of this myth is (once again) well beyond the scope of this work. However, the question central to this book is, where did this concept of sacrifice of the son of God arise? (No pun intended)

By looking at the differences between Jews and Christians, we see that Christianity could not really “have risen” out of Judaism; the concept of the sacrifice of a God or a son of God is core to Christianity, but is in fact, contrary to Judaism (or at least the Judaism of the dominant Returnee Jews). Perhaps “contrary” is too weak a term to describe the relationship of these two faiths. “Anathema” might be a better choice. To the Jews of the time, the idea of human sacrifice was the root cause of God’s anger at the Jewish people.

This conflict alone, this idea that Christ was sacrificed for the sins of humanity, shows that Christianity seems less like a direct “inheritor” of Judaism, and far more like the religion of the Phoenicians, that religion which had been in complete conflict with the prophets of Yahweh and the Judaism of the Returnees.

So, perhaps the Christian claim to be from Judaism, despite the obvious differences in the core concepts of the two religions, has some modern day correlation. Perhaps a modern day analogy can be seen in Marxism.

- While (almost) all Socialist and Communist movements see Karl Marx as their “founding father,” within the history of these movements there were (and still are) vast differences and variations. So every movement from Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge to the

Labor Party of England saw Marx as the founding spirit for their efforts. Yet they obviously had little in common, other than having the claim of a common “ancestor”. These variations led to dramatic, open conflicts even between strong dictatorial leaders. For example, Stalin saw no value in Mao, and his rural revolution of peasants, since Stalin hated peasants.

- In addition, there were changes in the concepts of what Marx said as the four “internationals” were developed. (The first being Marx’s effort, the second developed into democratic socialist movements around the world, the third being Lenin and his concepts of the “vanguard party”, and then the fourth being Trotsky’s, dedicated to “continuous revolution”. (for information on all the internationals please see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comintern>)

Therefore, just because the early Christians claimed the God of the Jews was their God as well, there seems to be little in common between the concepts of the Christians and Jews, just as there was little in common between the concepts of the second and third internationals. Both Lenin and Christianity claimed the same common point of creation (Marx or God) as the previous group (the Second International or the Jews) but beyond that the commonality seems to end.

To follow the analogy a bit more, both Lenin and the Christians actually seem to take the new concepts (socialism, and monotheism) and place them in the old model (the absolute dictatorship of the Czar, and the religion of the Ba’alist.)

But the difference between Jews and Christians go far beyond the issue of human sacrifice; there are many other factors. From a web site that helps persons convert to Judaism we find several key points that show that there is little to the concept of the “Judeo/Christian” tradition <http://www.convert.org/differ.htm>: These include:

- Christianity broke from Judaism, forming a new religion, so it is misleading, however comfortable the thought might be, to believe that the two religions are essentially the same.
- Jews believe “that the people of all religions are children of God, and therefore equal before God.... Judaism does not require that a person convert to Judaism in order to achieve salvation. The only requirement for that, as understood by Jews, is to be ethical. ...
- Judaism insists on a notion of monotheism, the idea that there is one God. As Judaism understands this idea, God cannot be made up of parts, even if those parts are mysteriously united. The Christian notion of Trinitarians ... is incompatible with the Jewish view that such a division is not possible. The Jewish revolutionary idea is that God is one. ... Many Jews see an attempt to divide God as a partial throwback, or compromise with, the pagan conception of many gods ...
- God is the creator of all that we like and all that we don’t. There is no evil force with an ability to create equal to God’s.
- To Christians, the central tenet of their religion is the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, part of the trinity, the savior of souls who is the messiah. ... To Jews, whatever wonderful teacher and storyteller Jesus may have been, he was just a human, not the

son of God ...

- In the Jewish view, Jesus cannot save souls; only God can. Jesus did not, in the Jewish view, rise from the dead.
- For Jews, sins are removed not by Jesus' atonement but by seeking forgiveness.... from God for sins against God and from other people (not just God) for sins against those people.
- Jesus, for Christians, replaced Jewish law. For traditional Jews, the commandments (mitzvot) (the 613) and Jewish law (halacha) are still binding.
- ... In the Jewish view, the messiah is a human being who will usher in an era of peace. We can tell the messiah by looking at the world and seeing if it is at peace. From the Jewish view, this clearly did not happen when Jesus was on Earth or anytime after his death. ...
- For the Jewish people, there is no God but God.
- Judaism does not accept the notion of original sin, the idea that people are bad from birth and cannot remove sin (other than) ... the sacrificial death of Jesus.... For Christians, there are no other forms of salvation other than through Jesus.
- In general, Jewish thinkers have focused on the ways to lead a good life on Earth and improve this world, leaving concerns about death and beyond until the appropriate time. Judaism has stressed the natural fact of death and its role in giving life meaning. ...
- Traditional Jewish thinkers rarely offer descriptions of life after death. Traditionalists gave the name Gehenna to the place where souls were punished. Many Jewish thinkers noted that since, essentially, God is filled with mercy and love, punishment is not to be considered to be eternal. ... It is also (from a Jewish perspective) possible that there is no separate Heaven and Hell, only lesser or greater distance from God after death ...
- Judaism does not believe people who are Gentiles will automatically go to Hell or that Jews will automatically go to Heaven on the basis of their belonging to the faith. Rather, individual ethical behavior is what is most important. ...

Another point, as brought out by Maccoby, in the *Sacred Executioner*, is that Jews like sex and see nothing wrong with sex, in fact:

- It is quite true that the Christian emphasis on celibacy and virginity was quite foreign to the Jews, who regarded sexuality as the gift of God, and regarded a virgin as someone to be pitied rather than admired. (page 160)

Maccoby goes on to make the connection between sex and another important difference between Christians and Jews: This difference in sexual attitude between Christianity and Judaism is closely bound up, psychologically, with the different importance placed in the two religions on the concept of sacrifice.

- Christianity is a religion in which sacrifice is primary; only through the sacrifice of Jesus

is the believer saved.

Maccoby argues that:

It is natural (then) that the sacrificer should be identified with the evil sexuality that the sacrifice is designed to expiate. Thus the Jews were regarded as representatives of the carnal sexuality which the Virgin Mary miraculously transcended, and as sneering at the Christian ideal of virginity by spreading the slander that the Virgin Mary was not a virgin at all.

He also sees a connection to this Christian view of sex linked to a difference between the Ancients concepts of the creation of humans with the Jewish concept:

- The Babylonian myth traces the origin of mankind to the sin of a rebellious god whose body was sliced up to form the human race; man's main object in life was thenceforth to expiate the sin of their ancestor by service to the gods; (as the Christians supported).
- In contrast, the Hebrew myth of the origin of man describes how God made the first pair by an act of free creation, endowed them with power over nature and exhorted them to populate the earth and cultivate it; a myth that breathes humanism and universal brotherhood
- The basic myth of the Christian civilization, again, identical with its foundation myth, was of the liberation of mankind from sin and from the misery of this world by focusing on the next. <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

While the Jews seem to focus on the glory and promise of creation, the Christians seem to focus on the failure of humans (the original sin) and seem to have accepted the Ancients' view of people being born in sin, rather than the Jewish concept of being born free.

As Maccoby also says in the *Sacred Executioner*:

Christianity is not an incident in the history of Judaism Though Christian theorists set great store by the alleged continuity between Judaism and Christianity, and though this continuity has been claimed from the earliest days of the Christian Church [except by "heretics" such as Marcion, who vehemently denied it] ... It was never much more than an illusion

- Correct [ing] this perception would benefit both Christians and Jews: Christians would stop trying to be "the true Jews", Jews could be left in peace, and Jesus could be seen as a Buddha-figure and [like a Cynic/Taoist philosopher](#)... As far as the central foundation doctrines of Christianity are concerned {they are not Jewish} (though this is not to deny the enormous influence of the Old Testament on Christian movements and individuals of a later age). Page 106

Maccoby asserts that Christianity is "in the history of Hellenistic religion." And therefore:

In order to illuminate the Christian sacrificial myth, therefore, it is necessary to turn away from Judaism to the salvation cults of the Hellenistic world.



Jesus as a beardless good shepherd

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Good_Shepherd_%28religion%29

While in good part, I agree with this evaluation, the premise of this book is that we need to look deeper in time than the Hellenistic world, and not just to the obvious Egyptian influences, but, as shown so far, to also look at the long forgotten and ignored Phoenician influences.

- Can we not say that much of the Hellenistic myths are based on Phoenician influence, and therefore' Christianity is a continuation of the morphing of the Phoenician concepts to the Greeks and then on to the Christians?

Maccoby, in the early parts of *the Sacred Executioner* clearly states some of the other differences between Judaism and Christianity. However, he fails to make clear the distinction between the Judaism of pre-Exile and post-Exile peoples. Here is part of his presentation, with my comments added in parentheses

- Christianity, with its concern with salvation, and its achievement of salvation through the death of a divine figure, shows a striking discontinuity with Judaism, which is concerned with neither of these motifs. (especially the Judaism of the Post-Exile period)
- In Judaism the word 'salvation' is used often enough, but it refers usually to physical or political deliverance. Moses, for example, was a 'savior' (Hebrew - *moshiy'a*) because he delivered the Israelites from Egypt, and even the rather disreputable Samson was a 'savior' because of his exploits against the Philistines. (Or where Cyrus is declared the Messiah)
- In Christianity 'salvation' means deliverance from eternal death, or hell; or, positively, it means the acquisition of eternal life for the soul. A doctrine of the 'resurrection of the dead' existed in Judaism at the time of Jesus, referring not to the immortality of the soul but to the resurrection of the body in the time of the 'World to Come'; doctrines of the immortality of the soul have also existed in

Judaism, but not with the full force of dogma. (And the Jews of the time were still mainly concerned with the liberation of the people and the state from Roman rule.)

And perhaps most important for this work, Maccoby claims:

- In so far as the term 'salvation' was associated occasionally with these doctrines, it was God Himself who was the savior, not any emissary or sacrificial figure; and nothing could be further removed from Judaism than the concept of God Himself suffering death.

(But not from the Pre-Exile Jews who were very familiar and accepting of the Ba'al cycle and the death and rebirth of Ba'al.

We should note that for some Jews around the time of the great revolts, there was a concept of resurrection of the body, developed (mostly among the fighters against Rome, and the Essenes, rather than for the mass of the people.

- Of specifically non-Sadducean doctrines, II **Maccabees** has a very clear expression of belief in the resurrection. Death is a "short pain that bringeth everlasting life" (II Macc. vii. 36; comp. other passages in the same chapter and xiv. 46). Judas is represented (II Macc. xii. 43 *et seq.*) as making offerings for the dead because "he took thought of the resurrection." The reference to such offerings is, however, without parallel in Jewish literature, and nothing is otherwise known of such offerings being made at the Temple in Jerusalem (see Israel Lévi, "La Commemoration des Ames dans le Judaïsme," in "R. E. J." xxix. 48).

<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=18&letter=M&search=1%20Maccabees>

So, if there was and is little in common with the Jewish world view, from where did Christianity arise? One of the obvious choices, as Maccoby and others point out is that Christianity arose from the combination of Egyptian and Greek "mystery cults."

- The term 'Mystery' derives from Latin *mysterium*, from Greek *musterion* (usually as the plural *musteria μυστήρια*), in this context meaning "secret rite or doctrine." An individual who followed such a 'Mystery' was a *mystes* "one who has been initiated," from *myein* "to close, shut," a reference to secrecy or that only initiates were allowed to observe and participate in rituals. Mysteries were often supplements to civic religion, rather than competing alternatives of such, and that is the reason these are referred by many scholars as "mystery cults" rather than religions.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery_cults

The Christian religion does seem to have most in common with these ancient mystery cults. From just a simple review of ancient mystery religions, we know:

- That at the core of most of these cults was a "death and rising god" who is killed and suffered agony and is then reborn.
- Many of these gods are portrayed as gods, and human heroes that were sons of gods, who, once they die, rise to enter the domain of the Gods and sit at the "right hand of God."

Also,

- In many of the stories that were the foundation of the cults there was also a “mother of God” , or perhaps a sister or wife of the god, who played a critical role in the story of the God

However, we start to see a divergence of Christianity and the other cults when it came to the concept of offering their gods gifts and tribute; Sacrifices of all kinds seemed acceptable to the gods in these other cults, but in none do we find “gods sacrificing themselves.”

- In fact, the Christians moved rapidly away from the concept of offering any “sacrifice” to the God, seeing that Jesus’ sacrifice ended the need for any other types. This rejection of the need to sacrifice is what first drew the attentions of the authorities to the Christians, and was the basis for most of the prosecutions against them (not a belief in Christ, but an unwillingness to participate in ritual sacrifices to the other Gods (and the Emperor).

It is critical to remember that as agriculture developed, the eating of meat decreased sharply. Part of the purpose of the religious festivals that developed over time was to create an organized and “rational” time frame for the eating of meat by urban peoples.

- The sacrificed lambs or oxen, after pieces were taken by the priestly castes, were eaten by the masses, in sacred meals. The only meat some people would eat throughout the year was at these events.

And this concept of eating only “sacred meats at sacred times” seems to grow out of the origins of the “sky gods” and can be traced back to ancient India (This can also be understood through the concepts of Marvin Harris, He suggests that almost all religious rituals are based on environmental issues or “cultural materialism.”

- The ancient Hindu scriptures allow eating the flesh of such sacrificed animals as the only lawfully allowed meat. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacrifice>

Another difference between the Christians and the other cults is the idea of God sacrificing his son. The Phoenicians seem to provide the logical origins of this type of sacrificial concept. In addition, this Phoenician sacrificing of the son of God for the sins of human kind seemed to be nearly unique among the Ancients. Beyond the three groups of human sacrifice we have discussed, they also believed in the sacrifice of the only son of God (The Il, Cronus story). As we have seen, the Phoenicians’ concept was spread throughout the “known world” (or at least the West) through their colonies and trading relationships.

This story of the sacrifice of the only son of God goes back to an event some 8,000 years old; El, or IL, the founder of Byblos, (who was later deified) sacrificed his son to the gods. This was one of the most ancient beliefs held by the peoples in areas where Christianity first took hold, and from where both Christ and Paul are reported to have lived. Again, the story is so similar to the Christ story, but separated by some 6000 years of history.

- For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled leoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the

altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.—Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

By the way, we also see the direct line between the Phoenician stories and what became the Greek myths leading up to the Olympian Gods ... in the fact that Zeus did the same thing as El or in this case Elus.)

- *Elus* or *Ilus* ... states that in the 32nd year of his reign, he castrated, slew and deified his father Epigeius or Autochthon “whom they afterwards called Uranus”
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cronus>

We see from this story the concept that “in time of crisis” the sacrifice of the son of the king, or the son of God was most needed, to redeem the whole people. Again, this concept is one rooted in the Phoenicians’ concepts and rejected by the Jews of the Exile, during the great reforms prior to defeat and exile, but mainly during the exile period. This was not true for the remnant “Hebrews.” So for some four hundred years the Jewish leadership tried to purge these concepts from their people, only to see it arise again under the guise of Christianity.

It was the custom among the ancients, in times of great calamity, in order to prevent the ruin of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging deities the most beloved of their children as the price of redemption: they who were devoted this purpose were offered mystically. *The Theology Of The Phoenicians: From Sanchoniatho.*
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

And what we clearly have had written out of the history of the rise of Christianity, as we have it, is the severe crisis that had befallen the area of the holy land or Middle East..

- The Jewish-Roman conflict had destroyed the entire area, killed perhaps one half to three quarters of the population, and completely eliminated the hope of “freedom” and liberty in this world. It was indeed a time of the greatest crisis for the people.

In addition, what appeared to be the covenant of Ezra that the land had been returned and would not be taken away - that promise from God seems to have been proven to be yet another falsehood. Therefore, this was a time of great religious crisis again.

So into the vacuum comes the story of Christ, or the force, saying that ... for the redemption of the people, and the rising of all the loved ones killed in the endless defeats in war, and for salvation in the next world, if not this one, God sacrificed his only begotten son, as had El, some 6,000 years before.

- Into the vacuum, where the active-aggressive resisters had failed, where the accepters were seen as traitors, and where the “mergers” were still being rejected, came the old religion, morphed into a new story.

In addition, the new story worked to attack the shortcomings of the “Jews”, and their stories, and in fact, the shortcomings of the “Hebrews” and their stories, as well.

- So we see that Abraham, the founder of the Hebrew culture was called upon to do the same thing, sacrifice his son, as did the founder of the Phoenician culture. However, while El did sacrifice his son, Abraham did not “complete” the act of child sacrifice.

The Christians make great effort (in early and present day) to link the story of Jesus to the story of Isaac, often saying that the sacrifice of Jesus “completed” the process of the sacrifice of Isaac that God halted, therefore saying:

- That, in fact, the sacrifice of the son was needed, and all issues with the failings of the Jews to gain God’s promise were linked to the actual failure to complete the sacrifice by Abraham; or Abraham not fulfilling his duty as the founder of the culture to seal the deal with God by completing the sacrifice of Isaac.

Also, the Christians, as a safety measure, built on the Babylonian Jewish tradition (found in the Talmud) or *midrashic* that Isaac had died and was in fact resurrected (so if Isaac did die, the Christians turned it to their advantage by saying God could bring the dead back to life.)

- Because Jewish tradition and the Rabbinical writings treat Isaac as if he actually did die upon the altar, Isaac became an early symbol for resurrection. The Midrash goes on to further emphasize the connection between Isaac, his Akeidah and resurrection, even going so far as to state that on Isaac’s merit, all the dead will be resurrected in the future.
- By virtue of Isaac who offered himself as a sacrifice on top of the altar, the Holy One blessed be He, will resurrect the dead in the future, as it is said, “To hear the groaning of him who is bound; to open up release for the offspring appointed to death.” (Psalm 102:21) “Him who is bound” is interpreted as Isaac bound on top of the altar. “To open up release for the offspring appointed to death” [is interpreted] as the dead whose graves the Holy One, blessed be He, will open up so that He may set them on their feet in the Age to Come. (Mekilta Simeon)

<http://www.rabbiyeshua.com/articles/2001/akeidah.html>

However, part of this Christian premise about Abraham not completing the “deal”, suggests that God needed to have the completed sacrifice with his “chosen people.” So the new covenant is based on the “completed act,” and the fact that the old one failed was simple, because the deal was never completed. God never got the blood of the first born needed based on the “contract law” of the day.

This concept of God’s sacrificing of his own son, leading to the salvation of all – or sacrificing of the son for the salvation of the “greater good” appeared to make the message of Christianity acceptable to the “Ancient” mind, and the peoples still connected to the Ancient ways, and the religion of Ba’al. That this salvation was open to all (as opposed to the mystery cults’ and their limitations) and that all that was required was belief in the “risen god” appears to us, in the early 21st century, as the new and radical component of Christianity, which at the time, set it apart from other religions. But was it unique; did other rivals of the Church offer similar concepts? And if it was unique, was there a direct connection to the Jews of the time, or the religion of the Phoenicians? (More on this soon)

Again however, we must also consider something more from Maccoby who claims that:

- The basic myth of the Christian civilization, again, identical with its foundation myth, was of the liberation of mankind from sin and from the misery of this world, which was given over to tyranny; this myth arose in the wretched conditions of the Greco-Roman Empire among masses who had lost all civic identity and attachment to the earth

because of the demoralizing conquests of Macedonian Greeks and their imitators the Romans; <http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

And it is because of this point that we have to return to the time line of events. In order to understand how this new religion, based on a hodgepodge of religious concepts from many influences, and in very old concepts, eventually reached the point where their views, among all others, were declared to be “divine truth not to be challenged by threat of many punishments, including death.” We need to look at how the Christians won the battle in the “market place of ideas.” In order to do this we need to understand the decline of the “Greco-Roman Empire,” and perhaps more importantly, the failure of the Jewish revolts against this empire.

We need to consider these events with an Ancient mindset:

It was the custom among the ancients, in times of great calamity, in order to prevent the ruin of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging deities the most beloved of their children as the price of redemption: Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. The Theology Of The Phœnicians: From Sanchoniatho. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/af/af01.htm>

Interlude ---

The Summary of Book One and Transition to Book Two

We have taken a long and difficult journey in the process of understanding the history of religion in the West from a political point of view. We have attempted to put in to play the political realities of such events as:

The transition from spirit worship to mother goddess worship to the develop of the sky gods

The rise of Phoenicia and its domination in the Mediterranean basin

The relative failures of the people and followers of Yahweh

And the great clash of cultures that came about with the rise of Persia, Greece and Rome and how those clashes changed not just the political world but the religious world as well.

We also attempted to put all of these events in a more appropriate view according to actual history. Therefore, we needed to greatly increase the role of the Canaanite/Phoenicians in both the political events of the day and also the religious events.

I believe that I have successfully shown that the core concept of what became Christianity ... god sacrificed his only begotten son... came directly from the Canaanite/Phoenician tradition, going back thousands of years. And that at the time this Christian concept was developed it was an idea of great disrespect and fear among the Jews. Clearly the origins of this idea were not new or Jewish, they were Ba'alists.

So while both the Romans and the Jews write with much hatred towards the Canaanite/Phoenicians (since they were both key rivals to the Romans and Jews for so long) we have real means of assessing the positive views of these people in their time.

Since they dominated so much for so long, the Canaanite/Phoenicians, (and I should add the Carthaginians) had far more influence on world religious development than the Hebrews/Israelis/Judeans/Jews ever did, until perhaps the Jews took on the role of "refusniks" against the Greeks and then the Romans (as they did in the 20th century against Soviet life style). Then the Christians, for defensive purposes, added the Old Testament to their own divine texts and the "Jewish" history became important to all who were becoming or would become Christian.

Here in this Jewish resistance to the "new world order" and new world religions is the origins of the horrors to come, the horrors based in the concepts of religious absolutism. One can argue that it is a small part, but then again it could be the key issue, for in the next book we will see that the world transitions from a flexible view of religion to an absolutist view of religion. The active resisters among the Jews were the first to really promote this concept of religion. Since there was only one god and one way to appease this god, we can see the roots of religious absolutism here. However it was the Christian triumph that propelled this absolutism upon the world.

However, the key issue that was more likely the source for the great impact of religious absolutism was the decay of Rome from a republic to an absolute dictatorship. The Roman state needed to find a means of justifying this new dictatorship, not just on political grounds but religious as well. We will see how this need of the new absolute dictator-emperors led to the need for a new absolutist religion: One God in Heaven and One Emperor on earth.

We will see how Rome tried several options, including Ba'al before settling on the greatly modified religion of Christ as its model for one god/one emperor. We will also see how the Christian Church, once ascendant, wielded this power based on the new proclamation by the Emperor that this was the one and only one true faith. This concept of one Emperor, one God had unintended consequences.

We will also see that like the Jews who resisted the new religion of the West, the majority of the Romans resisted the imposition of the new Christian-based, absolutist religion. The Romans "pagans" became the active resisters this time, only to be crushed by the Roman state.

The great visions and victories of the Greeks fighting against the tyrannies of the Persian kings were lost as the Roman Emperors ruled in the same manner as the Persian kings. However, the Persians had at least allowed for religious flexibility. The new Roman state did not. The new ally of the State, the Christian Church did not allow for flexibility and attempted to crush all active and even passive resisters to their power.

Book Two will take us through this process of the rise of absolutist religious power and the end of religious flexibility. We reach conclusions that show that this process created the ability of future states to also claim absolute right to demand conformity, with dire consequences for all the peoples of the world.

In Book Two we transition away from the theory on the development of the concepts of Christianity to the impacts of its absolutist world view. However the story of Ba'al does not go away, since it is Ba'al that eventually becomes the model for the absolute evil ... the Devil.

And it is the Jewish fear of the return of punishment for the worship of Ba'al ...the wrath of God ... that becomes the justification for the Church to impose the demand for absolutism on all peoples ...

With the rise of Christian absolutism we see a new manifestation of the dualism of the Persians ... Ba'al the savior as represented by Christ and Ba'al the great evil and most feared ... the Devil.

For sake of continuity ... the chapters in Book Two pick up with the ending of Book One.

The Ba'al Theory of Christianity

Book Two Ba'al as Both Savior and Devil



**How the Rivalry Between The Cult Of Yahweh And
The Worshipers Of Ba'al**

Helped To Create Christianity ---

And Religious Intolerance in the Western World.

- A Blending of Political and Cultural History with Religious History

**By - Glenn Young,
Enthusiastic Amateur Religious Historian**

Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. I. c. 10.—lib. IV. For Cronus, whom the Phœnicians call Il, and who after his death was deified and instated in the planet which bears his name, when king, had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son, who on that account is styled Ieoud, for so the Phœnicians still call an only son: and when great dangers from war beset the land he adorned the altar, and invested this son with the emblems of royalty, and sacrificed him.

(Ezekiel 16:20,21) And you took your sons and your daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and made them pass through (the fire) to the idols.

Micah 6:7: “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

Hebrews 10:10-12 “. . . we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ . . . But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

1 Corinthians 5:7 “. . . For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”

Sacred Executioner. Thus a story based on fact, by being interpreted in a way consonant with ancient sacrificial ritual, may actually take the place of that ritual, and function in such a way that it is as if the ritual were being perpetually performed.

The best example of this is the case of Jesus, whose death was interpreted as the sacrifice of a man-god, the placation of an angry father-god and the expiation of otherwise unpardonable sins; the blame for the shocking but necessary sacrifice was borne by a whole nation, the Jews (though crystallized in the individual form of Judas), who were given the role of a collective Sacred Executioner.

Hyam Maccoby, *The Sacred Executioner*
<http://users.cyberone.com.au/myers/maccoby.html>

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We also attempted to put all of these events in a more appropriate view according to actual history. Therefore, we needed to greatly increase the role of the Canaanite/Phoenicians in both the political events of the day and also the religious events.

I believe that I have successfully shown that the core concept of what became Christianity ... god sacrificed his only begotten son... came directly from the Canaanite/Phoenician tradition, going back thousands of years. And that at the time this Christian concept was developed it was an idea of great disrespect and fear among the Jews. Clearly the origins of this idea were not new or Jewish, they were Ba'alists.

So while both the Romans and the Jews write with much hatred towards the Canaanite/Phoenicians (since they were both key rivals to the Romans and Jews for so long) we have real means of assessing the positive views of these people in their time.

Since they dominated so much for so long, the Canaanite/Phoenicians, (and I should add the Carthaginians) had far more influence on world religious development than the Hebrews/Israelis/Judeans/Jews ever did, until perhaps the Jews took on the role of "refusniks" against the Greeks and then the Romans (as they did in the 20th century against Soviet life style). Then the Christians, for defensive purposes, added the Old Testament to their own divine texts and the "Jewish" history became important to all who were becoming or would become Christian.

Here in this Jewish resistance to the "new world order" and new world religions is the origins of the horrors to come, the horrors based in the concepts of religious absolutism. One can argue that it is a small part, but then again it could be the key issue, for in the next book we will see that the world transitions from a flexible view of religion to an absolutist view of religion. The active resisters among the Jews were the first to really promote this concept of religion. Since there was only one god and one way to appease this god, we can see the roots of religious absolutism here. However it was the Christian triumph that propelled this absolutism upon the world.

However, the key issue that was more likely the source for the great impact of religious

absolutism was the decay of Rome from a republic to an absolute dictatorship. The Roman state needed to find a means of justifying this new dictatorship, not just on political grounds but religious as well. We will see how this need of the new absolute dictator-emperors led to the need for a new absolutist religion: One God in Heaven and One Emperor on earth.

We will see how Rome tried several options, including Ba'al before settling on the greatly modified religion of Christ as its model for one god/one emperor. We will also see how the Christian Church, once ascendant, wielded this power based on the new proclamation by the Emperor that this was the one and only one true faith. This concept of one Emperor, one God had unintended consequences.

We will also see that like the Jews who resisted the new religion of the West, the majority of the Romans resisted the imposition of the new Christian-based, absolutist religion. The Romans "pagans" became the active resisters this time, only to be crushed by the Roman state.

The great visions and victories of the Greeks fighting against the tyrannies of the Persian kings were lost as the Roman Emperors ruled in the same manner as the Persian kings. However, the Persians had at least allowed for religious flexibility. The new Roman state did not. The new ally of the State, the Christian Church did not allow for flexibility and attempted to crush all active and even passive resisters to their power.

Book Two will take us through this process of the rise of absolutist religious power and the end of religious flexibility. We reach conclusions that show that this process created the ability of future states to also claim absolute right to demand conformity, with dire consequences for all the peoples of the world.

In Book Two we transition away from the theory on the development of the concepts of Christianity to the impacts of its absolutist world view. However the story of Ba'al does not go away, since it is Ba'al that eventually becomes the model for the absolute evil ... the Devil.

And it is the Jewish fear of the return of punishment for the worship of Ba'al ...the wrath of God ... that becomes the justification for the Church to impose the demand for absolutism on all peoples ...

With the rise of Christian absolutism we see a new manifestation of the dualism of the Persians ... Ba'al the savior as represented by Christ and Ba'al the great evil and most feared ... the Devil.

For sake of continuity ... the chapters in Book Two pick up with the ending of Book One.

Book Two – Ba'al as both Savior and Devil

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas – Section I – The Challenge to the New “Old” Order

Subsection A - Why Christianity Began to Succeed

There have been great discussions in many venues on why in the late Roman world Christianity succeeded, while the many other contenders for religious leadership at the time failed. The tendency, for so many generations in the past, was to write off the Christian triumph as simply the victory of the “truth”, that is Jesus is God’s Son and God and Jesus are working their wills on the earth and so Christianity triumphed. To those who believe in Christ, and predestination, that answer is enough (and my challenging of that concept as noted has gotten me in a lot of trouble in the past.)

However, history shows this not to be the case, and as we have seen in Part IV Section IV of book one, the victory of Christianity over the course of history was no sure thing. However, here, for the purpose of this book I will give a limited overview of some key elements of the reasons for its success and then relate them to the point about Ba'al, and the religion of Phoenicia.

Briefly, the key elements for the success of Christianity seem to include what were some truly attractive items for the people of the time, including, the fact that early Christians promised:

- A quick resolution to the disorders and miseries of the world, and that God’s son was coming back soon to set the world right;

(Mat 22 15-22, Mark 12-13-17, Luke 20-20-26)
- There was no need to concern yourselves about things that you were really powerless to deal with (slavery, poverty, Roman domination and the cultural wars) since this world was “unimportant (Render unto Caesar’s that which is Caesar’s and to God that which is God’s)
- That all persons, including women and slaves, were eligible for “salvation”, and therefore a far better world awaited them, than the world in which they lived; God’s blessing was no longer limited to free men.
- The means to obtain this “salvation” was quick, easy and not too invasive. There was no need for circumcision (or castration as was practiced in some religions of the time). There was no dire or restrictive dietary laws, no extensive costs (which, of course, would change later), no wild rituals that involved sex and drugs, only belief and baptism, and a few guiding principles such as the ten commandments (not 613), and some guidelines from Paul and the apostles.
- We have noted a number of times that the Jews of that time and the Orthodox Jews of this time need to keep the 613 commandments (An Orthodox Jew who is my friend described Christianity as Judaism Lite, since the Jews have 613 commandments, and all of are equal value and weight, while the Christians have only ten. He also said “We keep our 613 far better then they keep the ten, especially the one about thou shall not

kill.”)

Remember what I am discussing here is early Christianity. Many of the points changed to some degree as the Church grew in power and needed to adapt to meet the cultural needs of the peoples entering the Church (more blending).

But in the beginning

The major detrimental issue that got the early Christians in trouble was their refusal to offer public sacrifice to the Emperor (not the other gods, only the Emperor – Jesus was the last sacrifice, so no others were needed and the early Christians were warned by their leaders not to participate in the sacrifices of the non-believers). As far as the Romans were concerned, if the Christians did not want to eat the meat at the sacrifice, that was no problem. However, not sacrificing to the Emperor was a sign of disrespect and potentially, treason.

Most of the actual recorded and verifiable repression of Christians in the first two centuries of the church involved this issue of public sacrifice to the Emperor. It was considered a civic duty by all residents of the Empire to make public sacrifice to the Emperor, and when the Christians refused to do so they were seen, at least at first, not as traitors or any kind of a threat, but actually more as a public nuisance.

- The Romans may have seen this resistance to sacrificing for the emperor in the same way that we Americans today view some people who refuse to say the pledge of allegiance because of the insertion of “under God” into the text.

Most of the Emperors let this non-sacrifice go to some degree, and when pressured many Christians agreed to actually perform the public rite, including the Bishop of Rome, (who later became known as the Pope). This led to the so-called Donatist heresy which ripped apart the Church in North Africa for almost a century (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donatist>)

- The Donatists saw people who gave in as not the true Christians and would not accept the power of a priest who had sacrificed to the emperor (including the Bishop of Rome).

The actual repressions of Christians were infrequent and regional. In the first 300 years of Christianity in the Roman world until the major efforts of Diocletian, no more than 3,000 persons were ever executed for their religious beliefs, that of being a Christian. This was in fact a very small number of deaths compared to contemporary events involving religion:

- As noted, at least half of this period coincided with the great Jewish revolts in which millions of Jews were enslaved, publicly executed by crucifixion and other means, or became casualties of the war for both political and religious freedom from Rome.
- The world changed dramatically when the Christians got into power. In short order they made not believing in Christianity a capital offense, with hundreds of thousands more dying for religious freedom, this time freedom from an imposed religion - Christianity.

Despite this issue of sacrifice to the emperors, the overall presentation of the Christian world view was simple and attractive.

- The process of the Christian approach was more or less to strike open the supposed

secrets of all the Mystery Cults (the traditional religious means to “salvation” that had dominated the religion of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans for centuries, if not millennia), and to make the rites public and open to all in a vastly simplified version.

- The ritual eating of bread and drinking of wine was made part of the Christian process. It had been part of so many of the mystery cult rites, but was kept hidden and only open to members of the cult.
- The use of blood and the use of baptism were also extensively elements of the mystery cult rituals.
- The worship of a dying and rising god was core to most of the ancient cults as it was with Christianity, but the worship rites were open to only those who went through an extensive initiation process.

Again, while the early Christians did have these things in common with the cults, they also added elements of the Phoenician religion, not involved in these cults, which focused on the sacrifice of the first born, most beloved son.

In those days, the process of joining the other “cults” was a secret; not so with the Christians. Unlike the mystery cults of the time, the process to join the Christian Church was open to all, the communal meal was open to all, the “gift” of salvation was offered to all. No major changes in food or attire were required, there was no need to cut off your fore skin; nothing at all was needed but “faith in Jesus.” All that was required was “belief.”

- 1) And yet with all this simplicity, and all this promise, Christianity failed to grow much (and only then at a slow rate) during the first 200 years after the date for the crucifixion. It is estimated that somewhere around 225 AD, Christians made up no more than 2% of the Roman world. By comparison, just before the revolts, Jews comprised 10% of the population of the Roman world.

So, if simplicity of message, and openness to all did not win over the masses to the new religion, how did this religion triumph? In addition, how is it that this religion that began as a message of salvation to the poor, and a message of peace and brotherly love, becomes the religion of the rulers with Jesus represented as the “God of Battles?”

As always in this book, the overall answer to these questions is too great, but we can give an overview that might help to give some kind of framework.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas -

Section I – The Challenge to the New “Old” Order

Subsection B - When Did This Empire Fall????

The reason for the eventual success of the Christian religion actually lies in yet another cultural crisis. This time the crisis was not localized (to Judea) or to a particular religion (such as the Jews). This crisis was an almost “universal” one brought on by the ending of the “Pax Romana” and the near collapse of the Roman world. The traditional date given for the fall of the Roman Empire in the West is 476 AD. However, the Empire nearly did not make it that far. It actually came apart at the seams and nearly collapsed during what was called the “Crisis of the Third Century” (obviously a name given by modern persons).

However, to begin with, let’s look at how history can be told in many different ways, for example:

- There can be many “cases” for when the Roman Empire actually ended, and just to name a few...
 - 476 With the end of the Emperor in the West
 - 800 With the crowning of Charlemagne as the “Holy Roman Emperor”
 - 1204 With the taking of the Eastern Empire by the Crusaders
 - 1453 With the fall of Constantinople to the Turks
 - 1461 With the fall of Emperor David at Trebizond
 - 1503 With the death of the last man that claimed to be Emperor [Andreas Palaeologos](#);
 - 1804 With Napoleon officially ending the “Holy Roman Empire”

Then there is a date that is not much considered in the West, but which actually has the most “legal standing” in the East:

- With end of the Russian Empire, since the Russians claimed direct inheritance of the title (the third Rome), and “Czar” means Caesar.

So, one can clearly argue that the “Roman Empire” did not end until the great social changes of the 20th century.

But, again, the Empire almost did not make it out of the “third century.” From 235 to 285 AD, there was almost constant civil war in the Roman world, and starting around 250 AD, major invasions of the “barbarians” greatly added to the sense of the “end of days.”

During this period of some fifty years there were no less than twenty-one official emperors with dozens of others who had proclaimed themselves as such. Most were not of “royal blood” but merely successful soldiers, many starting out from very low rank to rise to the head of the Empire. (So, in Rome, anyone can grow up to be Emperor, just like the American mythos that anyone can grow up to be President.) Most of these “Soldier Emperors” were killed by other soldiers, who became the new “Soldier Emperors.” And, during this time, for the first time, an actual “divine” Emperor was killed in battle (Philip the Arab, being the first emperor to have that distinction – The Roman Empire had “black” or at least “brown” Emperors ... so anyone one, not just whites could grow up to be Emperor).

For the first time since the Romans became a worldly power after the defeat of the Punic peoples, whole regions of Empire were sacked, not just by invading “barbarians”, but also by competing Roman emperors. Most of the Eastern section of the Empire broke away under the not so famous now, but famous then, Queen Zenobia of Palmyra. In addition, most of the West moved away from the control of Rome, under the title of the so called “Gallic Empire.”

To those being sacked and raped by either or both “barbarians” and Roman soldiers, the end of the world seemed to be at hand. At least what was clearly at hand was the ending of the myth of Roman invincibility as rulers of the world, and also the end of Pax Romana <http://history.boisestate.edu/westciv/empire/15.shtml> .

For those killed in these conflicts, the end of their world was, in fact, at hand.

The faith in Rome and the “idea” of Rome ended, or almost ended for most of those still living. And since the “Roman” “center did not hold truly the second coming is at hand” ... forgive me Mr. Yates for putting this here. If ever a poem written in the future about future times also fit the past, it is the “Second Coming” by Yeats for the third century in the Roman world. http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Second_Coming

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

While the fifty year period (as organized by future historians) did come to an end, and the Empire did recover, after almost three generations of chaos, the Empire was a much changed place. The leadership had almost completely abandoned the premise of the “Republic” and the Emperor was no longer just “first citizen” but was the unquestioned ruler, more along the lines of the “Eastern Potentates.” In a sense, these changes represent reversals of the victories for freedom at Marathon, and against the second invasion of the Persians. The “kingship” of the Persians, resisted so long by the Greeks and Romans, was now in place in the West.

As with the Eastern models, the Emperors wanted no dissent or questioning of their authority. They demanded “conformity” in all things, including religion. The old Roman approach of relative acceptance of multiculturalism was now gone. This past approach of acceptance, was now seen as a cause for the great revolts of the Jews and the falling away of areas of the Empire during the “Crisis.” The new age of “Romanization” required all people to accept the single Roman way.

When all free males were made “citizens of the Empire” (212 AD) (see <http://www.localhistories.org/rome.html>) it was not really a “gift” but a new requirement that all peoples “act” Roman.

However, the old Roman religion reflected the old Republic where power and authority were distributed among many, and absolutism and dictatorship was very much hated. As the

Emperors moved towards an absolutist state, they looked to create and support a religion that reflected their “New World Order.”

The old Roman religion presented many gods with competing powers, and areas of authority. This religion was similar to the form of government of the Republic (many people sharing power and responsibilities).

Now, the Emperors needed to create a new vision of religion, and also of heaven, that mimicked their goals of undisputed power from one source, the Emperor. Therefore the emperors pushed hard for a new ideal which can be summed up in the slogan “One Emperor, One God.”

However, this effort for a new view of religion to match the desires of the emperors for absolute power did not even actually begin after the time of the “Crisis of the Third Century,” or during the Crisis itself, but prior to it, as Rome “slouched” (sorry Mr. Yeats again) towards the Crisis.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas -

Section I – The Challenge to the New “Old” Order

Subsection C The “Crazy Emperors” and the First “One God” Efforts

Actually, this period of the “Third Century” had come on the heels of some very difficult years that are not even considered part of the Crisis by modern writers. We moderns looked upon this period as a time of “crazy emperors” (from 180 AD with the death of Marcus Aurelius, or the last of the five “Good Emperors,” to 235 AD, with the starting of the Crisis). The Roman Senatorial class saw these as “hated” emperors, but these rulers seemed to be much loved by the “street” (the time of bread and circuses). During this time, these Emperors, for a wide range of possible reasons, destroyed (killed) much of the “capable” populations of Rome, perhaps leading to the Crisis of the Third Century and authoritarianism.

Three of these “crazy” emperors” were Commodus, Caracalla and Elagabalus. Commodus (who was wrongly portrayed in the two movies “*The Fall of the Roman Empire*”, and “*Gladiator*”, as ruling for a short time) was the son of Marcus Aurelius, and gave to the Empire twelve years of his megalomania (180-192).

He claimed to be the new Hercules, and the new Romulus, renaming Rome itself, as well as all the months of the year, and so much more, after himself. He also executed hundreds of the Senatorial class as well as thousands of others who “opposed” him (or at least in his mind opposed him).

Caracalla, who despite giving Roman citizenship to all residents of the Empire, is mainly remembered for killing his half brother and co-ruler (Geta) and having up to 20,000 of Geta’s supporters killed just during the first year of his six year rule (211-117).

And then there was Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, known as Elagabalus, (218-222), the teenage Emperor who was often ridiculed by later Roman writers for his great desire to become a woman, and who offered fortunes in gold to anyone who could “insert a vagina” into his body. (These sexual proclivities and desires were at least tolerated by his contemporaries.)

He is actually, however, the first Emperor to impose the concept of “One Emperor, One God” on Rome itself. And the religion he chose, was not Christianity, or even Judaism, but in fact, the religion of one of the all time archenemies of Rome, the religion of Carthage, and the religion of the Phoenicians;

- The religion imposed on Rome by the Emperor was that of Ba’alim.

If we are to believe the Roman accounts, he introduced the rite of sacrificing on a daily basis of noble children to the God. Again, based on the Roman accounts, all Senators were required to participate in the ceremonies of the religion, which they all appeared to do.

Yet this type of “crazy” rule was considered “acceptable” and not part of an overall later crisis. Partly because during these reigns, the borders and the overall mass of the people of the Empire were safe and secure (except for the direct “enemies” of the Emperors, in Rome itself). Therefore, despite the internal “politics” that led to so many deaths, the state seemed secure and the borders safe, (with the bread and circuses provided). For the masses of the

people, the Emperors were capably doing the job of “national security”.

Since this was still a time of transition from the “first citizen” concept to the “absolute ruler” of the post Crisis period, the Emperor had another job as well. That duty can be best summed up by saying the emperors had to maintain the peace of the empire by “protecting, preserving and defending” the diversity of the Empire; revolts could be prevented by allowing for a little diversity.

The limited number of writings that survive from the time, show that the chief criticism of Elagabalus’s actions (imposing Ba’alism), was not the fact that he had religious beliefs different than the “mainstream Romans” but, as Emperor, he was supposed to respect and support the religious diversity of the Empire,

- The writers said that as Emperor, Elagabalus should not try to impose or favor his religion above others.

While the sacrifice of children was seen as odd, and perhaps wrong by these contemporary writers, the rite was not actually questioned as being “illegitimate” (since it too was part of the diverse religions of the Empire that needed to be respected). From the writing of the times, we don’t read any explanations of why noble families did not resist handing over their children for the rituals. It’s not clear whether it was the fear for their own survival or actual acceptance of the religion as valid. Again, if these sacrifices actually did happen is also not clear. But the writers of the time and of the era stated that it did take place, and the ritual was clearly part of the Ba’alist tradition, and the Emperor was demanding not just acceptance of the religion as his, but acceptance of it as the only religion of Rome.

<http://members.aol.com/heliogabby/amazing/ae5.htm>

Elagabalus saw this as an opportunity to set up his god, ... as the chief deity of the [Roman Pantheon](#). Renamed [Deus Sol Invictus](#) or *God the Undefeated Sun*, (this deity) was placed over even [Jupiter](#).

To become the high priest ,, Elagabalus had himself circumcised (more likely in the tradition of El, not of the Jews). [Herodian](#) writes that Elagabalus forced senators to watch while he danced around the altar of (Sol Invictus) to the sound of drums and cymbals and that each summer [solstice](#) became a great festival to (Sol Invictus) popular with the masses because of its widely distributed food.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus>

The name of this god imported from “Syria” was Baal Emasa, and was accepted not as a “new concept” in the Roman world, but as one which was ancient. It had apparently also been growing in popularity in the Empire for a long time. The result of this cross fertilization created by the Alexandrian conquests and later Roman/Persian wars was that the Jewish and Persian ideas of a single god were becoming more popular in the Greek and Roman world.

However, the Classical mind was less accepting of an “unseen god” and looked to the sky for the “face of god” and saw, the sun.

Then, in the center of this pantheon, which had again become naturalistic, as it was at its origin, was placed the Sun, for he was the supreme lord that governed the movements of all the planets and even the revolutions of the heavens themselves....

From the time of Plato and Aristotle, Greek philosophy regarded the celestial bodies as

animate and divine creatures; Stoicism furnished new arguments in favor of this opinion; while Neo-Pythagorism and Neo-Platonism insisted still more emphatically on the sacred character of the luminary which is the ever-present image of the intelligible God. http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/mom/mom09.htm#page_185

And as the very ancient concept of “sun worship” was spreading throughout the “Roman world” the concept also was being molded to fit the needs of the Emperors as they attempted to gain more and more political power.

If heliolatry was in accord with the philosophical doctrines of the day, it was not less in conformity with its political tendencies. We have essayed to show the connection which existed between the worship of the emperors and that of the *Sol Invictus*. When the Cæsars of the third century pretended to be gods descended from heaven to the earth, the justification of their imaginary claims had as its corollary the establishment of a public worship of the divinity from whom they believed themselves the emanations.

Heliogabalus (Elagabalus) had claimed for his Baal of Emesa the supremacy over the entire pagan pantheon. The eccentricities and violence of this unbalanced man resulted in the lamentable wreck of his undertaking; but it answered to the needs of the time and was soon taken up again with better success. http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/mom/mom09.htm#page_185

And we see that Elagabalus’s effort to create a new “state religion” was not a creation of his own, but went back to two preceding Emperors. Elagabalus’s effort actually appears to be part of a policy of his royal family’s effort to create the “Eastern” style of rule. These emperors’ goal, even before the “Crisis of the Third Century”, was to rid themselves of the remains of the Republic (moving from the “Principate” to the “Dominate”).

- During the reign of the emperor [Septimius Severus](#) (193-211), there was no escaping eastern religion. Septimius came into contact with eastern philosophers in Emesa and studied the writings and sermons of Sol Invictus Elagabal From now on, the imperial family propagated the cult of Sol Invictus. More and more Syrians came to Rome and occupied high offices. [Caracalla](#) followed his father’s lead by expressing his wish for a single religious faith and cult, universally accepted. In the end, this plan was executed by Heliogabalus. <http://www.livius.org/he-hg/heliogabalus/heliogabalus-religion2.html#Religious2>

However, prior to the Crisis, and despite the slaughter of the Senatorial class, enough belief existed in concept of Rome to prevent this group of emperors from succeeding in their move towards absolutism. Elagabalus’s assassination had more to do with internal family politics and power grabs than with religion. However, with his death, his efforts at “One God, One Emperor” failed and his choice of god was put on the back burner, so to speak. (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus>) His successor, Alexander Severus, was willing to maintain the more traditional Roman view towards religion and even seems to be somewhat inclined to support Christianity.

- In religious matters Alexander preserved an open mind. In his private chapel he had busts of [Orpheus](#), [Abraham](#), [Apollonius of Tyana](#), and [Jesus](#). It is said that he was desirous of erecting a temple to the founder of Christianity, but was dissuaded by the pagan priests. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Severus

With Alexander Severus's death the "Crisis" began. However, before we conduct more investigation on the religious aspects related to the "Crisis" we need to do a bit more summarizing.

The cultural merging and morphing between East and West, as we now see, was actually two way. The Hellenization of the world eventually led to the importation of the religions of the repressed areas into the heart of the Empire, and into the Greek and Roman thinking. The Hellenic mind set was perhaps as impacted by the introduction of Eastern ideas as the Ancients were, and a great deal of merging took place in both cultures.

- A linking of the politics of the time and the religions of the time appears to take place. The importation of an Eastern style absolute monarch, a manifestation of God on earth, or the type of rule of the Ancients, replaced the concepts of the "republics" and "democracy" so long favored in the Greek and Roman world.
- These two tendencies, absolutism in governing and absolutism and monotheism in religion are closely connected in historical sequence.

However, for the purpose of our exploration of Ba'alism what is quite remarkable in the importation of the Sol Invictus religion into Rome, is clear evidence to us now that it came hand in hand with the religious principles of Ba'alism. Despite the defeats of Carthage and the Phoenicians, the centuries of challenges from the Greco/Roman cultures, and the attempted repression by the Jewish state, Ba'alism was not only still around, but was at the point, in the third century, of actually winning the "culture wars."

- The practices and rites of Phoenicia had not disappeared, but were actually being supported and promoted by the Roman Imperial family as the "true universal religion."

This shows that the religion of the Phoenicians and the related religion of the "non-Exile Jews" were still major forces during the time of the development of the Church. In fact, since we are talking of a period only some 50-60 years after the crushing of the last of the "Jewish" revolts, the religion of the Phoenician and non-Exile Jews was clearly more influential than the "mainstream" Judaism of the time, which had been crushed by the Romans. What remained of the leadership of the "mainstream" Jews was still trying to deal with the loss of Judea all over again, which took place despite the promise of God to Jeremiah. These Ba'alist groups, now appeared in the guise of a sun god, rather than a storm god. This iteration of the ancient Phoenician religion was far more influential than its Christian contemporaries.

This must have been a great affront to many of the Romans that the Emperor openly worshiped the gods of beaten foes (Carthage and Phoenicia) and was "acting Jewish" (not eating pork and being circumcised) another great foe of the Romans. (Think of it as if George W. Bush converted to Islam) And Elagabalus even arranged for the marriage of the Phoenician god and a chief Roman female goddess.

- As a sign of the union with the Roman religion, Elagabalus gave either [Astarte](#), [Minerva](#), [Urania](#), or some combination of the three, to El-Gabal as a wife.[29] He provoked further outrage when he himself married the [Vestal Virgin Aquilia Severa](#), claiming the marriage would produce "god-like children".
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus>

Yet again, in those days, it was not that the Emperor had these beliefs, but that he tried to

force them on all Romans. This was a major concern among the intellectuals and others. The Severus family effort to imposed worship of the “Sun God” of Syria, was mostly abandoned among the Senatorial classes after Elagabalus’s assassination, but remained very popular with the military, under the name of the god, “The Unconquered Sun” (*Sol Invictus*).

And now in the first stages of the Crisis, it was the Soldier Emperors who came to power (or came to power for short time, and then fell one way or the other). The situation stabilized to some degree with the Emperor Aurelian, who reigned about fifty years after Elagabalus, and thirty years into the period of political chaos. In this brief window of calm, Aurelian renewed the effort to impose Sol Invictus as the only god of the Empire.

Aurelian strengthened the position of the Sun god, [Sol](#) or Oriens, as the main divinity of the Roman pantheon. His intention was to give to all the peoples of the Empire, civilian or soldiers, easterners or westerners, a single god they could believe in without betraying their own gods. The center of the cult was a new temple, built in 271 in [Campus Agrippae](#) in Rome, with great decorations financed by the spoils of the Palmyrenian Empire.

Aurelian did not persecute other religions. However, during his short rule, he seemed to follow the principle of “one god, one empire”, that was later adopted to a full extent by [Constantine](#). On some coins, he appears with the title *deus et dominus natus* (“God and born ruler”), also later adopted by Diocletian. [Lactantius](#) argued that Aurelian would have outlawed all the other gods if he had had enough time.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian>

This God of Aurelian appears to be much the same god of Elagabalus, the Syrian influenced Sun God.

- Near the Flaminian Way, to the east of the Field of Mars, Aurelian consecrated a colossal edifice to the tutelary god that had granted him victory in Syria. The religion of state that he constituted must not be confounded with Mithraism. Its imposing temple, its ostentatious ceremonies, its quadrennial games, its pontifical clergy, remind us of the great sanctuaries of the Orient and not of the dim caves in which the Mysteries were celebrated.

http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/mom/mom09.htm#page_185

However, the term Sol Invictus eventually came to be a collective one, referring to at least three concepts of the “solar god.”

- The use of the title **Sol Invictus** allowed several [solar deities](#) to be worshipped collectively, including [Elah-Gabal](#), a Syrian sun god (the god of Elagabalus) ; [Sol](#), the patron god of Emperor [Aurelian](#) (AD 270-274); and [Mithras](#), a soldiers’ god of [Persian](#) origin
- The only Eastern cult that was officially tolerated (in the Roman Empire), probably from Aurelian’s reign, and certainly under Constantine, was that of Sol Invictus

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus



Fig. 43.

SOL THE SUN-GOD.

Installed by Mithra as the governor of the world. To the right the globe of power. (*T. et M.* p. 202.)

The death by assassination of Aurelian (275 AD) (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian>) ended hope that the “Crisis” was over, and also ended the effort to press for one religion, for the time being. No emperor for the next forty-five years had established enough strength to press for such a dramatic change in Roman culture. Due to the situation, the emperors could not alienate any of the powerful senatorial sectors (who still held mostly to the Roman sense of diversity, and were mostly still devoted to the older Roman religion) or regional peoples, or the army, by pressing for a religious revolution.

However, as the empire became more “militarized” (as a result of the constant civil wars and the new “barbarian” invasions during this century of crisis) the army became more dominant in determining political power, and they were almost wholly followers of Sol Invictus; but not the Sol Invictus of either Elagabalus or Aurelian, but that of their Persian military rivals, Mithras.



Mithraism is one of the more interesting of religions that today is almost completely unknown. Its origins are also unclear, but based on its symbolism it seems closely linked to the idea presented earlier of the “great year” and in this case, it seems that it is linked to the ending of the time of Taurus, and the beginning of the age of Aries. The symbolic representation of Mithras seems clearly linked to the immensely popular study (in both the Ancient and Classical world) of astronomy and its corresponding concept found in astrology

- **Astrology** (from [Greek](#): αστήρ, αστρός (astér, astrós), “star”, and λόγος, λόγου (lógos, lógu), “treatment”, “theory”, “study”: lit. study on the stars) is a group of [systems](#), [traditions](#), and [beliefs](#) in which knowledge of the relative positions of [celestial bodies](#) and related details is held to be useful in understanding, interpreting, and organizing information about personality, human affairs, and other terrestrial matters. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrology>

The symbols of the god cutting the throat of the bull, and all the symbols around this action are clearly linked to the new God of a new area, the ending of the 2000 year “Age of Taurus”.

- Indeed, the constellations common in the sky from about [4000 BCE](#) to [2000 BCE](#) were [Taurus](#) the Bull, [Canis Minor](#) the Dog, [Hydra](#) the Snake, [Corvus](#) the Raven, and [Scorpio](#) the Scorpion, all of which may be identified in the fresco from [Marino](#), a standard Hellenistic iconography (*illustration, above right*). Further support for this theory is the presence of a lion and a cup in some depictions of the tauroctony: indeed [Leo](#) (a lion) and [Aquarius](#) (“the cup-bearer”) were the constellations seen as the northernmost (summer solstice) and southernmost (winter solstice) positions in the sky during the age of Taurus. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithraism>

Regardless of its evolution, (mainly being developed under Persian influence) by the time of the Third Century AD, the religion was closely linked to the Sun god concept of Sol Invictus and was rapidly becoming the main religion of the both the Roman and Persian Empires (or at least the main religion of their armies). Mithraism was so popular in the Roman world, that it was the chief rival of the Christian church for nearly two centuries, along with the traditional Roman religion which held strong until the beginning of the fifth century.

- In his 1882 work *The Origins of Christianity* [Ernest Renan](#) stated that “if the growth of Christianity had been arrested by some mortal malady, the world would have been Mithraic. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithraism>



We can not give a full and complete history of Mithraism, nor of the great internal debates on the religion and its concepts here in this book. What we can say is that the traditional “history” of the great rise of Christianity and the “conversion” of Constantine after his rise to power, is mostly “untrue” and greatly tainted by the modern dominance of Christian writers. However, we need to give more of an overview of both the political and cultural history to help explain some of the events that did occur.

- What we need to know is that the society that came out the Crisis was greatly different than the Roman society at the start of the Crisis.

After the Crisis the Third Century, the Emperor Diocletian succeeded in gaining the type of powers that the other emperors had sought.

Diocletian brought an end to the period popularly known to historians as the “[Crisis of the Third Century](#)” (235–284). He established an [autocratic](#) government and was responsible for laying the groundwork for the second phase of the [Roman Empire](#), which is known variously as the “[Dominate](#)” (as opposed to the [Principate](#) instituted by [Augustus](#)), the “Tetrarchy”, or simply the “Later Roman Empire”.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian>

Diocletian ruled much like the Persian emperors, rather than a Roman or Greek republican or even as a “first citizen.” The victories of Athens against Persia were seemingly now completely reversed.

In addition, Diocletian, and later Constantine, implemented edicts that basically “froze” society; eliminating any hope for “social advancement” of the “average Roman.”

Also, this Sol Invictus religion was the religion of Diocletian, and he attacked Christianity as being a rival of his primary religious belief; however, once again the pretext for the repression was the Christians’ unwillingness to make public sacrificial offerings to the Emperor.

- On [February 24, 303](#), Diocletian’s first “Edict against the Christians” was published. This ordered the destruction of Christian scriptures and places of worship across the Empire, while prohibiting Christians from assembling for worship. After fires in

Diocletian's palace at [Nicomedia](#) and revolts in Asia Minor, the Emperor took harder measures against Christians, ordering the arrest of all bishops and priests. These were later released if they agreed to sacrifice, which was taken as a sign of [apostasy](#) from Christianity. In spring 304, a further edict ordered everyone to sacrifice.

- According to one estimate, a total of 3,000–3,500 Christians were killed in the persecution, while many others suffered torture or imprisonment.
- This wave of persecution was enforced most strictly in the Empire's eastern provinces, where it lasted in some areas until [313](#). This year saw the issue of the [Edict of Milan](#) by [Constantine I](#) and [Licinius](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian>

Aurelian's Sol Invictus, as well as some elements of Mithras, comprised the religion of Constantine the Great, up to the time of his death and conversion to Christianity (if that in fact really happened). Constantine joined in the efforts of the leadership of the Empire to eliminate the chaos being caused by the religious fighting and persecutions. Among other steps, he issued the Edict of Milan;

The Edict, (313 AD) in the form of a joint letter to be circulated among the governors of the East, declared that the Empire would be neutral with regard to religious worship, officially removing all obstacles to the practice of [Christianity](#) and other religions.

The Edict clearly was aimed at allowing for religious freedom, not as a proclamation of Christian superiority (as it is often presented in Christian-influenced history).

It “declared unequivocally that the co-authors of the regulations wanted no action taken against the non-Christian cults.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Milan

Throughout the earlier periods of his reign, Constantine clearly supported and promoted Sol Invictus. He often compared himself in public statements and in coinage to the solar god.



Coin of Constantine, with depiction of the sun god [Sol Invictus](#), holding a [globe](#) and right hand raised. The legend on the reverse reads SOLI INVICTO COMITI, to (Constantine's) “companion, the unconquered Sol”. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great

It was only when the peace of the empire was constantly being undone by internal fighting

between the Christian sects that Constantine moved more publicly towards accepting Christianity. He went so far as to call for the first major legal meeting of the Christian leadership to try to sort out the differences in the Church, and to help bring about internal Roman peace. This meeting was held in Nicene in the year 325 AD. Mainly, the effort failed, as the famous Nicene Creed, while developed by the members present, was met with harsh resistance by many Christians and (it) took some seventy-five years of more internal fighting before it was accepted (at least in the West).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea

Although he was not baptized, Constantine at least adopted the persona of a Christian for the meeting. It appears that his motivation was not only to try to bring about peace, but also to make the church subservient to the State:

- The Council of Nicaea was historically significant because it was the first effort to attain [consensus](#) in the church through an [assembly](#) representing all of [Christendom](#). “It was the first occasion for the development of technical [Christology](#).”
- Further, “Constantine in convoking and presiding over the council signaled a measure of imperial control over the church.”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea



What remains of the great church in Nicaea (modern day Iznit in Western Turkey) in which the first great council was held under the guidance of Constantine, and the concept of the Trinity was made “Orthodox” – Personal Photo

Once the effort at consensus failed, Constantine reverted to a far older form of soothing. It appears that he attempted to purchase the Church’s support for his compromise solution (called the Nicene Creed) to their internal debate and to use this form of persuasion in order to convince the Christians to stop causing riots in so many of the Eastern cities. As noted, in this, Constantine’s efforts to bring peace to the Church, he failed. The Church took the money and kept on with the internal fighting. At the very least, however, Constantine was successful in setting a precedent for bribery in the Church.

- As noted there is almost another seventy-five years of internal fights between the supporters and the rejecters of the Nicene Creed, (if to say that debate was ever solved) and there were Emperors who supported the Creed and those who did not. At

times there was an Emperor in the East who did and an Emperor in the West who did not, and vice a versa. In addition, most of the German peoples did not accept the Creed, but were mostly Arian Christians who rejected the creed (with almost the sole exception being the Franks).

The first real “Christian Emperor” who created and enforced edicts against the older religions was not Constantine, or his family, but Theodosius (the Great), and then his incompetent sons Honorius, and Arcadius.

- Theodosius promoted Nicene Trinitarianism within Christianity and Christianity within the empire. In 391 (AD) he declared Christianity as the only legitimate imperial religion, ending state support for the traditional Roman religion.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodosius_I

Later we will talk about this process of the “Christianization” of the Roman State, however, we will now pause for a quick review of important points we have presented in this chapter:

The Severus effort to impose an Eastern religion on the Empire (to help bring about state unity) seem to be have been a “dry run” for the more successful efforts of Constantine, and the Emperor Theodosius, and for exactly the same reasons;

- Whereas Constantine legitimized Christianity as a religion in the 330’s, later, just short of 400 AD, Theodosius imposed it as the State Religion. The goal of these rulers was to strengthen their justification of dictatorial powers through the concepts of “one god, one emperor.”

But most importantly for this work, and for the premise of this book, the Severus efforts, especially those of Elagabalus, shows that the religion of Ba’al was still vital and influential long into the “Christian” era. The use of child sacrifice, and other rituals of Ba’al, including the Latinization of the name of Ba’al as “Balus” by a Roman emperor, shows that the religion was not only a competitor of Christianity, but was clearly more important and popular long into what we can call Christian history, and long into what is now called the fourth century (AD).

Sol Invictus, the religion of the Phoenicians, or at least a modified form of it, clearly was gaining momentum in the key element of the society, the army. The soldiers ran the Empire and Sol Invictus (both as a Phoenician sun god and as Mithras) was the religion of the soldiers. And, the army seems to be the general cause of the “Crisis of the Third Century.”

- Perhaps the link between the chaos brought on by the almost constant changing of emperors at the whim of the army, and the army devotion to the Mithras religion, may have added to the eventual failure of Sol Invictus.

However, as with so many other crises in the past, the people who actually survived the crisis looked for some explanation for the failure of the old order to maintain stability and “freedom from fear.” It appears that Christianity was not just in battle with the “old gods” of Rome (who appeared to be on the decline anyways) but was just one of a wide range of religions in competition for the hearts and minds of people living through a crisis (or better said a series of crises.)

As we have seen throughout history, people in this time period sought relief in religion(s) for the “failure of the state” and the failure of the army to maintain order. They did not turn to

religion out of some desire to constantly create disorder. (With a reference here to the old Mayor Daly of Chicago who during the 1968 Democratic Party convention stated: “The police are not here to create disorder; the police are here to maintain disorder”) In the first and second centuries AD, the Roman world still offered a wide selection of religious approaches, including many new (mainly Eastern) ones. Though based on ancient foundations, many of these religions appeared to be new to the West.

However, it was during this time of fear, this Crisis of the Third Century, that the people (and the rulers) of the Empire really began to “reconsider” their religious view. Many religions began to boom, including as we have seen Sol Invictus and Mithraism, but also multiple forms of Christianity. There were so many that they can not be accounted for here; but among the “Christian groups” there was even a merging of Mithraism and Christianity call Manichaeism (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manichaeism>) (The first “Christian” religious choice of St Augustine).

So, while the pre-Crisis emperors were importing Sol Invictus more for political reasons, the Crisis, and the lost of faith in the earthly security that Roman had offered, made people really start to consider the issues of their own personal salvations.

- Well past the Crisis, St. Augustine wrote some of his most important writings during another period of chaos, as his city of Hippo lay under the siege of the Vandals. He wrote about the *City of God*, as his city, and his whole understanding of the world, was collapsing around him. There was no help forthcoming from the Emperor; help had to come from elsewhere. There was no “salvation” in this world (the army coming just in time to save the city). As he waited, he saw salvation coming in the next.

Yet even with all the chaos of the Crazy Emperors, the Crisis of the Third Century, the imposition of the Dictatorship of the new style emperors, the invasion of the Germans and Goths, and the tales of the even greater evil forces pressing towards the empire (the Huns) this 200 year or so period between 190 AD and 395, even with this on-going crisis and the new realization that the Empire was failing to meet the basic need of protection and stability, Christianity did not become the dominant religious player that “history” seems to project to us in our time.

- Even with the coming of the reign of Constantine, Christians were still only about 10% of the Roman population.
- By the beginning of the 300s AD, Christians in the eastern half of the empire had expanded to twenty or more percent of its Greek speaking population. North Africa had become largely Christian, the result of Christian evangelists having learned the Coptic and Berber languages. And Christians had also learned Syrian, Thracian and Celtic. Across the empire, Christians were around ten percent of the population - their number having doubled in about fifty years. <http://www.fsmitha.com/h1/ch23.htm>

What is clear from this all too quick review is that:

- If the pre-Christian Emperors had succeeded in their intentions to make Sol Invictus/Ba'al the religions of the Empire, Christianity would have been completely repressed, (as with all the other religions of the time).

However, without the success, it is also obvious that the worship of Ba'al, or Mithras, by the

name Sol Invictus, by the Roman Emperors was a clear challenge to the small, but growing Christian minority and something that threatened the very existence of the Christian religion itself. It is also true that the “old religion” of the Empire, still remained active and powerful, especially within the elite classes in the West. And our popular image of how Christianity came to power is, well, “popular”, but mostly untrue.

As we examine this period of crisis, we see a world in which the emperors move towards absolutism, and we see a world in which the social structures of centuries are crumbling. Christians are still a small minority that grows during the period of crisis, but still faces challenges on many fronts. To win these challenges, to defeat the competition during this time, there was a clear need by the Christians to adopt and adapt, if not the message of the religion, at least the “bells and whistles” of the religion.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas –

Section I – The Challenge to the New “Old” Order

Subsection D The Buying and Selling of Christianity

The Church, during the 2-6th centuries AD made changes to meet the popular and political challenges of the other religions. The process was not easy or smooth and it resulted in extensive new fighting over the very aspects of the “vision” of the new Church. The infighting, after some 275 years of initial sparring, became so severe that it escalated into almost the “main event” of the times. As we’ve discussed, this state of affairs eventually led Constantine and other Emperors to intervene. The accusation of heresy became the ultimate “haymaker” in these internal religious fights.

As noted, the Imperial efforts took two roads, trying to find an intellectual solution to the internal debates and the second was to buy off the church. The second option was far easier. Churches were built and supported throughout the Empire (with great amounts of gold used in their construction). The Bishops became virtually salaried employees of the State.

Between the reign of Constantine and the fall of the West, the Church was made, through direct and indirect state policy, vastly wealthy. It became the second most-wealthy entity in the Roman world, other than the state. In doing so, the Roman state bought off all the energy of the Church that had been focused on meeting the needs of the poor, as a means of perhaps ameliorating the great social injustices of the day. The State still encouraged the Church to work with the poor, but only as a means of gaining the support of both.

- At the same time, the Church leadership became wealthy, and as is almost always the case, corrupt and self-interested.

As the “pagan” world was ending, all the lands and wealth of the “pagan temples” and shrines were turned over by the State to the Church (after the pagan structures were destroyed or modified.) In just a few short years, the nature of the Church leadership changed, as did the overall message of the Church.

- For the most part, the Church became a tool of the state (in both East and West) and Christ became an “imperial” cult god (which was treated much like Sol Invictus or Mithras). The Church, however, had still not been widely accepted by the “masses.”

However, the struggle to gain the “love of the masses” began during the rise to power. It is during this timeframe that we mostly see the “solutions,” or the compromises to the masses, become incorporated in the religion. Once in power, and once in the pocket book of the Emperors the message of the church changed more and more from social justice in this world to “give unto Caesar, and a focus on the “next world”.

The “people” resisted the imposition of this new state absolutist religion on them long after current popular history would have us believe.

- Rome was more pagan than Christian up until the 390’s; Gaul, Spain and Northern Italy, in all but the urban areas, were pagan, save Milan which remained half pagan. For a review of this resistance please see

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_religion_in_ancient_Rome

It appears that Paganism, much like Christianity in its early days, was seen as means of “political resistance” against absolutism. Those who seemed most likely to maintain the old religions were those most concerned about “rights” and resistance to the “imperial emperors.” Therefore, in its last days of Roman history, the appeal of “paganism” was in defiance of the culture of absolutism.

As much as the State tried to impose Christianity from above, there was great resistance from “below.” However, the Church once bought off and in power, at the request of the emperors, began to make changes. They began to “merge” the world of the Pagans and the world of the Christians, to cut down on the cultural conflicts and to allow the “Pagans” to be more accepting of the new “absolutist” religion.

We can see a number of the steps taken by the Church to do just that; to better sell themselves to the “masses.” Some of these came early on, in the pre-power days, others we can see were controversies, but once in power, the Church moved to change the controversy, often in favor of the “older” religion.

On the road to this position of power, one of the first things the Church did to make itself more popular and appealing was to establish separation from the Jewish perspectives. The Jews were still considered a major “Enemy of the State” because of the many, large scale revolts during the early period of the Church’s development. As we have noted, the final break with the Jews came over the second and third revolts against Rome, when the Christians refused to support the wars.

- To separate themselves from the Jews, in the eyes of the non-Jewish populations and to be more acceptable to those non-Jewish peoples, the Church had ended the requirements of circumcision. (According to Justin Martyr, Moses had instituted this rite because he had a cruel heart.) They had also done away with all the food restrictions associated with Judaism.

While the Jews were unpopular with most Romans (but not most subjected peoples of the Roman Empire) other religions were popular and had also to be addressed and appealed to with compromises. To address the “Pagans” and the Sun God worshipers, the Church made some easy concessions that allowed the people to “do what they did, only slightly differently.” A few things the Church did for the followers of Sol Invictus included:

- Making Sunday the Christian day of rest, and
- Having Christ born on December 25th the sacred day of the Sol Invictus



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c0/MithraRelief.jpg>

However, they did not officially do so, until under the pay of the emperors. As noted in a Lutheran website on the history of Paganism;

The earliest extant record of Christ's birth being observed on December 25 is the Chronography in 354 A.D. By the time that Chrysostom was Bishop of Constantinople (398-404), Christ's birth was being observed on Dec. 25 throughout Christendom, though the Church in Armenia observed it on January 6.

(One) theory of how this came about states that the Church of Rome deliberately chose December 25 as the date of Christ's birth to turn people away from a pagan feast that was observed at the same time. Since the time of the Roman emperor Elagabalus (218-222), the god Sol Invictus (he Unconquered Sun god), had been one of the chief deities worshiped by the Romans. When Emperor Aurelian (270-275) came to power, he sought to restore the worship of the Sun god to prominence and make him the chief deity. In the last years of his reign, Sol was hailed as "The Lord of the Roman Empire." ... December 25 was observed as "the birthday of the Sun god" (natales solis invicti). The Church at Rome seems to have chosen this date to counteract this pagan feast of the sun god and turn people instead to the "Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2; Luke 1:78). Or put another way, Julius chose December 25 so that the Son of God rather than the Sun god would be worshiped.

- Though there is no direct evidence that proves that the Church of Rome deliberately chose December 25 so that Christ's birth would replace "the birthday of the sun," we do have sermons from fathers of the church who soon after this used this line of reasoning. For example, Augustine (354-430) in his sermon 202 and Leo the Great (440-461 -- PL 54 Sources chrtiennes 22) gives this line of reasoning. http://www.orlutheran.com/html/chrmas_pagan4.html

Making such concessions to Pagans, to try and win their support was relatively easy. However, there were other issues, almost at the core of the religion that needed to be addressed, that not only limited the appeal, but actually brought the religion under ridicule. One such issue was:

- "Where was Christ?"

And, the second part of the question included:

- Why had not the savior returned in a prompt fashion to become king of the world and to take out revenge on the unrighteous rulers and evil doers and bring relief to the downtrodden?

The need to respond to this question, to other religions, as well as to their own people, was quite clear when Christ did not come back right away (which is what most of the early Christians thought was about to happen). The belief was that Christ would return within days, then months, then “any time now”.... And as that event, the Second Coming, (or ‘**Parousia**’ (παρουσία), did not occur, the very premise of the Church was at risk.

It appears that the writings of the gospels promise a quick return

- “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in [his kingdom](#)” ([Matthew 16:28](#), [Mark 9:1](#), [Luke 9:27](#))
- “This generation (γενεά) will not pass away until all these things have taken place” ([Matthew 24:34](#), [Luke 21:32](#))

And also there seemed to be a great expectation from the early church membership of this return. As we see in the writings of Paul:

- Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

He goes on to say in the same letter:

- 3Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

We see it was a pressing issue also in Second Peter 3:

3First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”

In reply to this issue, Peter offers a “cosmic” response:

8But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

And again, Peter is promising that the “meek shall inherit the earth” so to speak:

11 what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12

as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming ... 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Despite the early efforts to downplay the idea of the Second Coming:

- “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matthew 24:36)

As pointed out in a website with the modest name of “All About God”

“This doctrine of the millennial kingdom had already many adherents in the first centuries of the church. Theologians as Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and others believed in the ...(imminent) return of Jesus Christ. ... “

Also Paul stated: in 1 Thessalonians 4:17:

- “Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds of the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.”
<http://www.allaboutgod.com/>

The debates on this issue of the second coming, and when it would occur, were long and hard, and internally destructive to the early Church. The vexing problem of the imminent return of Christ is ignored or downplayed in most histories of the time.

Internal to the overall debate were many “sub-questions”; such as will the resurrection of the dead, as promised with the Second Coming, be physical or only of the “soul.” In this world, at this time, these were critical questions.

- Early Christians looked forward to the return of Jesus as judge of the world, to the resurrection of the dead, and to eternal life in a perfected world... (Christian) apologists defended the resurrection of the dead against pagan philosophers, who considered the soul worthy of perfection but not the body. Origen, however, promoted a Platonic viewpoint and denied the physical resurrection.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity

So, while the idea of Christ coming back was there, it was one involving much debate; many followers looked for the “second coming” in their lives. When the event did not occur, for hundreds of years, the Church had to take action to try to limit the damage that was being caused to its popular appeal by this apparent lack of a leading character in the magic act (the prestige). (As noted in a recent movie, *The Prestige*, the key to any good magic act is not making something disappear, but bringing the object back.) And so far, the Church had failed to bring the key element, “the prestige”, back.

However, once in power, the issue became more complicated. Since the return of Jesus would end the world as it existed, it would also end the power of the emperors themselves. This was not quite a popular notion among the emperors, and slowly the Church moved away from the concept of the “imminent” return of Jesus. The Church ended the debate on the timing of the “second coming” by simply declaring the belief in the “imminent” return of Jesus a heresy.

The Roman Catholic Church officially condemned the chiliastic (imminent) theories as erroneous in A.D. 373, some fifty years into the Roman Emperors pay book.

- The Roman Church regards, to this day, all faith in a peaceful millennial reign of Christ as heretical teaching. It maintains that the period of a thousand years mentioned in the book of Revelation must not be understood in a literal sense. This view is called 'A-millennialism.

See <http://users.ncrvnet.nl/tjderuiter/site3/chilias-e.htm>

Another challenge for the Early Church was that it was denounced for exactly what it appeared to be, a new religion without historical foundation. This concept of a "new religion" was much ridiculed by the philosophers of the time. Most of the early church people replied that they were not really new, but were based in the religious history of the Jews (a new covenant with God, replacing the old one).

This claim to be a continuation of the Jews, and therefore an Ancient religion was rejected by one of the early powerful leaders of the Church itself, Marcion of Sinope. He claimed that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of Christ (there was no New Testament, as of yet. Part of the irony of all this is that Marcion is the first to actually try to codify a "New Testament"). He claimed, especially on the heels of the great failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt (and the two other failed Jewish revolts), that the God of the Old Testament was a devil, based in hate and falseness. And that the God of the "New Testament" or the God of Jesus, was the true God of love and forgiveness and salvation. Marcion saw the Jewish God as

- ... inconsistent, jealous, wrathful and genocidal, and that the material world he created is defective, a place of suffering; the god who made such a world is a bungling or malicious [demiurge](#). In Marcionite belief, [Christ](#) is not a [Jewish Messiah](#), but a spiritual entity that was sent by the [Monad](#) to reveal the truth about existence, and thus allowing humanity to escape the earthly trap of the demiurge. Marcion called God, the Stranger God, or the Alien God, in some translations, as this deity had not had any previous interactions with the world, and was wholly unknown.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcionism>

This concept of seeing Christianity as offering a "new God" and a new religion fell right into the ridicules of the intellectual class of the time and was rejected by the newly developing Church. The Church actually rushed to include the Old Testament as the foundation of the Church, in the Christian Bible, in response to Marcion's attacks.

- This battle over whether the God of Jesus was new or not, raged in the Church for hundreds of years with Marcion's beliefs being ruled as "heretical" only in the mid 350's.

This issue caused the Church to run to the Jewish sources for support of the concept of Christianity as an "ancient religion", in order to refute Marcion. This again brought up the unpopular connection to the Jews. So the Church started to look into these "Old Testament" texts more and more, not as the Jews would, but with the purpose of finding "predictions" for the coming of Jesus as the Messiah and also, unfortunately, as real history. The Church reasoning for including the Old Testament was three fold: to try to win over the Jews, to denounce Marcion, and perhaps most importantly, to respond to the attacks of their very

“newness.”

The answers to these issues on “newness,” and many others can be found in the writings of Justin Martyr, in both his “Apologies” and his “conversations” with Jews. (For these and other early Christian writings see <http://www.ccel.org/> . A fuller understanding of all the problems facing the Church in their efforts to obtain “popular positions,” that I can not even outline here, but the writings of Justin Martyr are a good place to start. For example, in his Chapter XXIV of “Apologies” he makes the claim that the Church and Christians are really just like everyone else, just a little different ... and slightly misunderstood.

- “Though we say things similar to what the Greeks say, we only are hated on account of the name of Christ, and though we do no wrong, are put to death as sinners; other men in other places worshipping trees and rivers, and mice and cats and crocodiles, and many irrational animals. ... And this is the sole accusation you bring against us, that we do not reverence the same gods as you do, nor offer to the dead libations and the savior of fat, and crowns for their statues, and sacrifices.”

Although he does go a bit farther in separating “Pagan” from Christian

“And, secondly, because we—who, out of every race of men, used to worship Bacchus the son of Semele, and Apollo the son of Latona (who in their loves with men did such things as it is shameful even to mention), and Proserpine and Venus (who were maddened with love of Adonis, and whose mysteries also you celebrate), or Æsculapius, or some one or other of those who are called gods—have now, through Jesus Christ, learned to despise these, though we be threatened with death for it, and have dedicated ourselves to the unbegotten and impossible

God; of whom we are persuaded that never was he goaded by lust of Antiope, or such other women, or of Ganymede, nor was rescued by that hundred-handed giant whose aid was obtained through Thetis, nor was anxious on this account that her son Achilles should destroy many of the Greeks because of his concubine Briseis.

Those who believe these things we pity and those who invented them we know to be devils.”

In both these and other writings, Justin uses the claim that becomes a dominant opinion stressed throughout early Christian writings, (and while it seems to support the views of Marcion, that the God of the Jews was a devil, Justin claims it does not).

- Justin and others early Christians say that the ancient Greek and Roman (and all the other Gods of the Ancient world) were devils and demons, but not the God of the Old Testament.

So, while on the face of it, this would seem to be attacking the “pagans,” it was actually a more “friendly position” than the Jews took on the Pagan gods; as we have seen before the early Christians did not directly challenge the existence of the other Gods, only the nature of their “holiness,” whereas the Jews denied the existence of all other gods but their God.

And, again, the Christians justified their existence and the common factors based on seeing the Gods of the old beliefs as devils, and said that the devils had fooled man into believing false ways of God and that Christ’s coming was to bring them back to God.

However insulting this may sound to us, in the modern world, it actually was a major selling point that enabled the Christians to appeal to the Pagans;

- This “devil” connection allowed the Christians to offer rituals similar to the Pagans, with only slight modifications (and the Christians were saying ... you almost got it right, but you got it wrong because “the devil made me do it.”

For example in Justin’s conversations with Trypho the Jew,

- For when they tell that Bacchus, son of Jupiter, was begotten by intercourse with Semele, and that he was the discoverer of the vine; and when they relate, that being torn in pieces, AND HAVING DIED, HE ROSE AGAIN, AND ASCENDED TO HEAVEN; and when they introduce wine into his mysteries, do I not perceive that the devil has imitated the prophecy announced by the patriarch Jacob, and recorded by Moses?

This was the justification, the Devil’s influence, through which, the Church over time moved towards the “popular” religions of the day, and to eliminate controversies over the “little things” between them and the “pagans.” By using this basis, the Church could “morph” the existing practices of the old religions into the practices of the new religion by simply saying, “It’s the same format, different meaning. We do it “God’s way” and you did it the ‘Devil’s way’, so you can keep doing it, (slightly differently) and you’re still okay.”

This morphing and “devil” justification worked for many of the issues of the “masses” and their religious needs. However, there were many different views in the Church on how to address the Greek philosophies, and their resistance to Christianity, especially on the issues associated with “goodness” and the “God Head”. The view point of the Church changed over time and circumstance, often based on the emperor in power.

The conflict between the two modes of thought is recorded in scripture, in Paul’s encounters with [Epicurian](#) and [Stoic](#) philosophers in Acts, his diatribe against Greek philosophy in 1st Corinthians and his warning against philosophy in Colossians 2:8

Over time, however, as [Christianity](#) spread throughout the Hellenic world, an increasing number of church leaders were educated in [Greek Philosophy](#), leading to a fusion of the two modes of thought.

One early [Christian](#) writer of the second and early third century, [Clement of Alexandria](#), demonstrated the assimilation of Greek thought in writing: “Philosophy has been given to the Greeks as their own kind of Covenant, their foundation for the philosophy of Christ ... the philosophy of the Greeks ... contains the basic elements of that genuine and perfect knowledge which is higher than human ... even upon those spiritual objects.”

[Augustine of Hippo](#), who ultimately systematized [Christian philosophy](#), wrote in the 4th and early fifth century: “But when I read those books of the [Platonists](#) I was taught by them to seek incorporeal truth, so I saw your ‘invisible things, understood by the things that are made’ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenic_philosophy_and_Christianity

Despite the potential seen in these quotes, and despite the efforts of so many to “merge” the major ideas of Christianity and Greek philosophy, these big issues of “godhead” that were

raised internally, based on Greek thought, also needed to be addressed by the Church to both avoid ridicule and to gain popularity. What we know as the “great heresies” came about in the struggles to answer the questions raised by the Greek-based philosophies of the day.

The most critical area that the early Christians faced was one of how to address the perhaps most ancient of all traditions, that of “sacrifice.” As noted, the early Christians were in the most trouble and were called “atheist” because they not only rejected human sacrifice (because after Christ no additional human sacrifice was needed), but all forms of sacrifice - animal, vegetable, mineral, etc.

Up to the time of Constantine, through Diocletian, the main cause for efforts to repress the Christians was not in religious concepts, but in their failure to perform sacrifice. They specifically rejected the sacrifice to the cult of the Emperor, which was considered a civic duty by all Romans; most of the early repressions against the Church were over this question of “sacrifice.”

And as we have seen, the Church moved quickly to see the justification for no sacrifice. They held firm to the belief that the “sacrifice of Jesus” was the last needed sacrifice.

The social aspect of the sacrificial process, as we have also seen, was replaced by the “mass” and the “sacred meal.”

The early Christians never quite figured out how to deal with the emperor issues, until of course, the emperors became Christian and “praying” for the Emperor became the newly accepted form of obeisance.

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, there is a line concerning a prayer for the Czar; “May the Lord bless and keep the Czar – far away from us.”

The Church moved quickly to deal with the “mass” public issue and their traditions associated with the animal sacrifice rituals, by declaring the “Mass” the religious sequence of the “new religion” to be in fact, a sacrifice, and a substitute for the traditional (devil inspired) rituals of the past.

The inclusion of bread and wine in the ceremonies were a direct substitute for the “sacred meal” associated with the past rituals of sacrifice.

- So, once again, the Church was saying to the potential converts: “It’s OK to keep doing what you have been doing, only a bit differently; the devil put you on the right track for the wrong reasons, now we will make it right with just a few adjustments.”

However, this solution seemed to only work for the “event” issues, of when and how to worship and when and how to have the big celebrations (Christmas, Easter). Here, we see the easy “morphing” taking place.

- However, the Church had a much harder time in trying to figure out the right way to address the real major “form” question of the period, the “god head;” and the church involved itself in such intense debates and outright fighting, that it almost destroyed itself over this “form” question of the “true nature of Christ” and how Christ fit into the “godhead.”

During the evolution of the Church, there were many answers to this question of what and who Christ was, and what and who God was, ranging from the proposition that Christ was actually fully human but adopted by God at the point of baptism, to the idea that he had no human nature at all and was fully God, and his crucifixion was an illusion (since gods can't really die.) (For a full view of all the heresies and their answers to the questions of the day, please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_heresy)

- These issues may seem tangential to the general theme of this book, except when we remember the basic justification given by the Church as to why Christ's death was not to be considered a human sacrifice which of course was the explanation that Christ was not human. If there was belief that he was fully or partly human that takes away from the "difference" position of the Church.

The most impacting of these fights, over the nature of Christ, became known as the Arian Heresy; which lasted for almost one hundred years. At times, the "Arian" point of view was actually shared by the "Orthodox" Church as well. The line supported by the emperors became the official line of the Church, and often the Orthodox Church view was considered wrong or simply ignored. Often during the times of the split Empire, one of the emperors favored the Arians (as did many of the German tribes who converted to Christianity as Arian Christians) only to be replaced by an emperor who supported the "Orthodox" views (more appropriately put, at this time, the Nicene Creed view.) Almost all of the "invading Barbarians" were "Arian Christians," not "Pagans".

And while we can not really go into the whole nature or history of the struggles over Arianism, it is important to note that a major part of the Arianian view was that Christ was the begotten son of God, but, begotten before the beginning of time. The Arians saw Christ in some way inferior to God, because of this process of "begotten."

Because most contemporary written material on Arianism was written by its opponents, the nature of Arius' teachings is difficult to define precisely today. The letter of [Auxentius](#), a 4th century Arian [bishop of Milan](#), regarding the missionary Ulfilas, gives the clearest picture of Arian beliefs on the nature of the Trinity: God the Father ("unbegotten"), always existing, was separate from the lesser Jesus Christ ("only-begotten"), born before time began and creator of the world. The Father, working through the Son, created the Holy Spirit, who was subservient to the Son as the Son was to the Father. The Father was seen as "the only true God." [1Corinthians 8:5-6](#) was cited as textual proof:

- Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as in fact there are many gods and many lords — yet for us there is one God (*theos*), the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord (*kyrios*), Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."

A letter from Arius to [Eusebius of Nicomedia](#) succinctly states the core beliefs of the Arians:

... [W]e say and believe and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; and that he does not derive his subsistence from any matter; but that by his own will and counsel he has subsisted before time and before ages as perfect God, only begotten and unchangeable, and that before he was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established, he was not. For

he was not unbegotten. (Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, p. 41)
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arianism>

In reading this we hear the strong echoes, if not out right statements, of the religion of the Ancients, being spoken of in “morphed” terms: First there is God the creator, the first generation of Gods, and then the Lord (or Ba’al) who is begotten by God, and as the first begotten, the most beloved, his death, his sacrifice, enables him to become the judge for all human kind. We can clearly see the transition, the Jewish veneer, (mainly there to enable the claim on only one God, (to justify one emperor) and then the rest is not only the mystery cults made public, but the focus of the sacrifice of the only begotten son of El, God, a tale going back some 6,000 years into the history of Phoenicia.

And so slowly over hundreds of years, the Church and the practices of the Church evolved, becoming much closer to the practices of their religious rivals at the time. The Church eventually adopted the superstructure of the Roman religions, and the Roman rites, as well as the rites of Sol Invictus, which became “Christianized” (while still letting the people have their festivals and “sacrifices” through the mass). The religion of resistance to the new Roman world, the religion that sought to gain freedom from the Roman world through focus on the “next world” was so successful in morphing the old concepts of the Ancient world into the Roman world that slowly, the Christian religion became the religion of the status quo.

And while we have looked at some of the issues of how it attempted to morph, we still have not answered the question of how, from roughly 313 AD (Edict of Milan) to about 450 AD, Christianity went from being the religion of about 10% of the Roman population, to supposedly the single allowable religion of the entire Roman Empire. To answer that question we need to look at yet some more history.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas - Section I –

The Challenge to the New “Old” Order

Subsection E- Why Christianity Succeeded - Or did it? – Yet another Crisis

We have already seen that the rise of Christianity was neither quick nor smooth. In its first 350 years it had a great deal to work out internally and a great deal to work out with the “general public.” By 325 AD or so, the religion was still not that popular in the European land mass, even though it had become the “cult” religion of most of the Emperors. Nor was it popular in rural areas throughout the Empire (It was most popular in the “Eastern cities.”) Therefore, it had a growing power base, but was not dominant anywhere in the Empire, except maybe in North Africa. Although:

- 2) In 301 AD, [Arsacid Armenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Armenia) was the first sovereign nation to accept Christianity as a state religion. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Armenia
- 3) Ethiopia was the second state to do so ... It converted to [Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) in 325 or 328 under [King Ezana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Ezana) and was the first state ever to use the image of the cross on [its coins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Aksum) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Aksum

We have already discussed the Church’s effort to attract people, so now we have to examine the barriers that prevented the “coming over” to the newly presented religion, and as I would project, the newly stated ancient religion, for the bulk of the population.

Once again, records are not all that available so again we need to speculate a great deal. Perhaps one of the key reasons for the slow growth of Christianity was:

- Up until around 300-375 AD or so, there were still too many persons who had not really given up on the idea of “Rome” to completely give in to the “next worldliness” of the Christians (and other religions).
- Also, as we have seen the support of Paganism was a rejection of the absolutism of the emperors.
- There was still a great deal of competition and a variety of “alternative views. Perhaps there were too many people who accepted other versions of how to get to this next world, and other visions of how this next world would look.
- Perhaps it’s just that people find it hard to give up on old values, despite the conditions and the laws.
- In addition, for a long time, many people simply did not think that Christianity made much sense, nor was it “stable”; the basic creed of the Christians appeared to change frequently. The Church was constantly involved in internal fighting over some fine point of the religion.
- To many, it must have seemed that almost all of the Church members were being “damned” by one sect or another.

In fact, during the later Roman Empire period, Christians were killing Christians all the time

over disagreements of the “nature of Christ” or whether God was of three natures or two or one. They were killing each other in an attempt to resolve the “Arianism” dispute (which, as we have said revolved around the question of whether Jesus had been always alive, and with the “Father” at the beginning of time, or if he was newly created by the “Father”). In addition, they were killing each other over the role of women, and if Mary was really born of a virgin... and on and on.

The initial fighting can be seen in the earliest writings of Paul, and can be followed through the entire remaining history of the Roman Empire. Christians were killed by fellow Christians after hurling the term of “heretic” or some other accusation of “wrong thinking” at their internal competitors. These resulted in religious “sectarian” riots. Far more Christians died at the hands of their fellow believers than all the Christians that were killed as a result of Rome’s efforts to make Christians offer public sacrifice.

And what was “correct” at one point of the Church history, would be changed at a later point (Mao and Stalin were, by far, not the first to do this type of “rewriting of history” made famous in George Orwell’s “1984.”)

During the Roman Empire period, while Christianity was making its rise to power, the Church denounced many persons and “movements” that Church leaders determined to be counter to the “right actions” of the Church (and on occasion the Church was denounced and rejected for its’ wrong actions, by more “pure Christians” such as the Donatist of Africa, who split from the Church when even the Pope gave into Roman power and offered sacrifices to the Emperor).

- Excommunications from the Church during Roman times were frequent and many “thinkers” were deemed heretics, and forced into exile or worse.

One of the key reasons we have so little from the past is the Church’s constant efforts to destroy any work that differed from not just their religion, but also from what they became, “Orthodox.” We are now aware that there were dozens of “gospels” but few remain, and only recently have the texts of many been found (hidden away by true believers thousands of years ago, hidden by the “non-Orthodox” in the face of Orthodox repressions).

Once in power, thanks to the support of the absolutist emperors, the “Orthodox” Christians did all they could to “repress heresy” more strongly than they acted to repress Paganism. Hundreds of thousands of Romans (Christians and non-Christians) were killed in religious riots (over the nature of Christ or other such issues) or by official repressions of both “pagans” and “heretics” by the later Roman states (meaning both the Eastern and Western Empires). Soon, through the aid of the emperors, non-belief in Orthodoxy became a capital offense.

Once in power, for most of the Roman Church history, in lands controlled by Christians, it was not safe to be a non-conformist, or non-believer (although the Church did on occasion, later on, make efforts to protect the Jews against the “masses” of Christians out to kill them all, in the name of Christ).

- Yet in this earlier period of Christian development, from say 250 AD on, most people found that it was not safe to be a Christian, not so much due to the occasional Roman repression, but more so due to the constant infighting within the Christian church.
- Also, once the Church was in power, say by 400 AD, most people found that it was

now not safe to be a non-Christian.

And with all this conflict, there would be periods of time where Arian bishops (one of the so called great heresies) were in power in some places, to be replaced by “Orthodox” bishops, and later to be replaced again by an Arian, and then again Orthodox. Each “replacement” would result in “purges” of the followers of the others with great loss of property and life among the Christians.

The persecution of the Christians by fellow Christians over internal debates is highlighted by a letter of one of the great rivals (as we have noted) to the “Orthodox,” the Bishop Arius:

“Some of them say that the Son is an eructation, others that he is a production, others that he is also unbegotten ... These are impieties to which we cannot listen, even though the heretics threaten us with a thousand deaths. We are persecuted, because we say that the Son has a beginning, but that God is without beginning.” -- A letter from Arius to [Eusebius of Nicomedia](#). (Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, p. 41) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arianism>

In this case, the “heretics” referred to by Arius were in fact what we would call the Catholic Church, his great rival. And of course, the Catholics called Arius a heretic and back and forth it went.

- So, what of the poor, every day Christian?
- Based on what some gathering of bishops would determine was “correct” (and the Bishops did change their minds often) an “every day Christian” ran the risk of being on the right side of a controversy one day and the wrong side the next. (“We have always been at war with Eurasia” – as George Orwell would say in 1984).

In fact, the history of Christianity shows a movement violently in opposition to itself, and complete with internal cold and hot wars over its whole history, with major conflicts taking place throughout the time of the “fall of Rome”.

- These internal debates started almost immediately with the conflict between Paul and the “Jerusalem church” over both money and the rites of Judaism (circumcision and eating of pork, and the rest of the 613).

It took a while for the Church to have official sanction to kill, but they soon achieved that power as well.

- It should be noted that Pagans were not the only ones in trouble in the new order; in 385 AD Priscillian becomes the first (Christian) heretic ever sentenced to death under a Christian prince. He was executed for witchcraft, which was a capital offense, but in reality, he made enemies because of his Manichaeian doctrines.
http://www.davidmacd.com/catholic/timeline_of_catholic_church.htm

In addition, besides this constant internal fighting, the theology of the Church, or what has been called “the good news” or the “divine truth” was not always as attractive as the Church and Christian leaders (even of today) thought.

Meanwhile, within the Empire, with the help of the Roman State, most peoples eventually

became at least nominally Christian. However, within a few hundred years, once free of Rome, many of these people abandoned the religion.

- Within some 250 years after the end of the Empire in the West, North Africa including Egypt, Spain, and most of the Middle East south of Anatolia, were no longer ruled by Christians, and within another 100 years or so most of the people in these areas had abandoned Christianity (and, as can be proven, this was not because of forced conversions to other faiths)

In addition, we can see other areas where Christianity of one form or the other took hold only to be again, abandoned.

- Almost all of the lands along the trade routes (most of what is now called Central Asia and Mongolia) to China had a strong Nestorian Christian presence for more than 400 years, only to be replaced by Islam.
- Christianity was established in China long before the coming of the Portuguese and Spanish in the 16th Century, but basically died out due to lack of local conversions.

And in later history, we can see that the appeal of Christianity is not always, well, that appealing. In the heyday of European “imperialism” in which large areas of Asia came under “Christian rule,” there were little long term impacts on the religion of the peoples in many of these areas.

- The Christians regained the “holy land” during the Crusades and despite efforts at forced conversion of the conquered peoples, and even in the face of death for not converting. Christianity was still rejected by most of the conquered people (those not killed by the Crusaders).
- Later, England ruled India for 200 years and few Indians converted to the Christian faith.
- For almost two centuries from the mid-18th to mid 20th, the French, English, American and Russian missionaries were all over China, and very few Chinese converted.

In relatively modern times, Christianity was mainly spread (with almost the sole exception of the Philippines, Viet Nam and Korea) to nearly empty lands, or lands made nearly empty by the arrival of the Christians (the die off in the Americas of the “native populations is estimated to be nearly 90%) or, through severe repression of local peoples, such as in Africa.

- The purpose of this “side trip” into history, is to take a look at a point of view that is not often presented in the West. It is also to give some justification for understanding that the “ideology” or the “creed” of the Church has not been universally accepted once the “masses” heard the “good news.” Therefore, there is little reason to expect that the Roman peoples also accepted the “good news” upon hearing it. In fact, what records remain shows the opposite; most persons rejected Christianity upon first (and after many, many times) hearing the story of Jesus.

However, despite all of these problems of internal fighting, and a religion that seemed to many as “silly” or at best unclear, and at first so counter to the existing order (at least as far as the process of sacrifice goes) it seems that the Christians won the culture wars, and that

Rome became Christian after all. So why did they win? Some of the answers could be found by looking at some simple issues: Here is how the Christians differed from, for example, one of their key rivals, Mithras:

- Perhaps it is that the Christians were better organized (The Mithras religion had no organized priesthood).
- Perhaps it is that that Christians were open to more peoples and classes (The Mithras religion did not allow women or slaves).
- Perhaps it is that the Christians adopted a better environment for worship (The Mithras religion worshiped in caves).

These differences (better organized, allowing for more people, better settings) tended to help the Christian movement. But then again, as we have seen over and over, the real reason for “rethinking” of the Roman religion was not based on these simple things, but in fact lies in yet another crisis that leads to the very elimination of the Western Roman state. This was a long term, slow rolling crisis that covered the time period between 376 AD (the beginning of the Gothic Wars) please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Adrianople and 476 AD to the ending.

It is here, with the “ending of the world,” that we finally see the abandonment of the older religions and the acceptance of Christianity by the remaining bulk of the population. However, as we will see most of the transference came as a result of State pressure, not true love of Christ. The change came as a result of fear and repression, and abandonment of hope, not so much in a belief of a new beginning, or the “good news”.

Also, it was the increasing civil power of the Church (in the West) that made it less safe to be a non-Christian. As the state of Rome collapsed, and the Church took on most civic duties expected of a state, the power of the Church increased along with its ability to demand conformity. The Church could demand conformity in exchange for civil services. As the Church gained civil power, the new post-Roman Empire civil authorities (the German replacement states) needed to gain support from the Church which had become the de facto “civil infrastructure.” The prerequisite for the Church’s support became the new rulers’ acceptance of the Orthodox religion. (Still, this was a slow process, with much resistance of many Arian kings.)

Therefore, political power, and as we will see, the willingness to use that political power seems to be one of the great answers of why Christianity won out. The State bought the Church off, and as the state collapsed, the Church, at least in the West, was all that remained. And for the successor states to gain the support of the remaining superstructure (which was of course the Church itself) the Church demanded that they accept their religion.

This explanation seems simple (based in Marvin Harris’ concepts of cultural materialism) and understandable enough. However, there is quite a bit more. The other major element of what attracted people to the Church, or at least forced the people to the Church, was fear, and the message of fear that the Church presented.

As we will see, this fear seems to represent the times well.

However, first, to understand the fear, and the “success” of the fear, we need to examine the

crisis in the Roman world in more detail.

There are many theories on how the Roman Empire in the West fell (or transformed itself) and we have little evidence to show which theory is more correct than any of the others.

- One of the primary reasons for the sheer number of theories is the notable lack of surviving evidence from the 4th and 5th centuries. For example there are so few records of an economic nature it is difficult to arrive at even a generalization of the economic conditions. Thus, historians must quickly depart from available evidence and comment based on how things ought to have worked, or based on evidence from previous and later periods, on [inductive reasoning](#). As in any field where available evidence is sparse, the historian's ability to imagine the 4th and 5th centuries will play as important a part in shaping our understanding as the available evidence, and thus be open for endless interpretation. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decline_of_the_Roman_Empire

(So, I too can do this type of presentation)

However, we may need to look back a bit more for evidence of an increase in the support for Christianity to the Emperor who is given the most credit for ending the Crisis of the Third Century; the Emperor Diocletian.

Once firmly established in power, and once he had created a new state constitution which he believed would end the succession turmoil that had plagued the Empire for most of its history (and was mostly the cause of the Crisis of the Third Century), the Emperor made efforts to fix the economy, which due to the Crisis, had nearly collapsed. Diocletian instituted what has been called the first effort at "state socialism."

- In 301, Diocletian attempted to curb the rampant [inflation](#) with his [Edict on Maximum Prices](#). This edict fixed prices for over a thousand goods, fixed wages, and threatened the [death penalty](#) to merchants who overcharged.

As part of this effort, he declared that all persons would continue in the profession and status of their parent.

- Skilled laborers, local bureaucrats and tenant farmers ([coloni](#)) were made hereditary by law in an effort to stabilize both the tax base and the apparatus for tax collection http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian#Economic_reforms

He froze people in their station (which was somewhat ironic since Diocletian was the son of a slave). And, through this edict, he robbed people of any hope of advancement in society.

- Despite the American myth of we being the first real land of opportunity (Horatio Alger and all that - see <http://www.horatioalger.com/>), Rome had been also the land of great chance for advancement (as seen in the life of Diocletian himself, from a son of a slave to Emperor). With Diocletian's ruling much of that hope ended.

And as we noted, Diocletian also instituted the last major repression of Christians during Roman times. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian_Persecution that continued under his successors (more or less) until Constantine became sole ruler.

The economic policies of Diocletian were much hated by the people of the Empire, and while

greatly feared, it appears that Diocletian was none too well liked either. Therefore, it is possible, that we begin to see the increase in support of Christianity, not just due to the success of Constantine, but because of the hatred of Diocletian. (If he repressed the Christians, perhaps I'll join the Christians, as a process of opposing Diocletian.)

It should be noted here that the original term AD was not the in the year of our lord ... that came about in the 6th century , but the term AD or the beginning of counting time in a “new beginning” referred to the end of the Diocletian repressions (After Diocletian) ... and later, about two hundred years after the Christians started tracking time based on the ending of the Diocletian repressions, the Church changed the year and the meaning of the term to AD and determined that the Christian year was now 525 AD rather than about 220 AD.

Also, it is possible that the appeal of Christianity grew with the closing of the possibility of advancement in “this world” mandated by Diocletian.

- If the empire was freezing advancement in this world, perhaps the Christian message of salvation in the “next” made more sense to many, and therefore was more appealing.

However, this appeal to the safety and glory of the “next world” may have grown among the populace, as the Roman State began to fail in its basic responsibility of providing safety to the people. The failure of the Roman state increased, beginning with the Battle of Adrianople in 378, which many historians feel started the “end game” of the Roman Empire in the West.

- The second Battle of Adrianople ([August 9, 378](#)), sometimes known as the Battle of Hadrianopolis, was fought between a [Roman](#) army led by the [Roman Emperor Valens](#) and [Gothic](#) rebels (largely [Thervings](#) as well as [Greutungs](#), non-Gothic [Alans](#), and various local rebels) led by [Fritigern](#). The battle took place near [Adrianople](#) and ended with an overwhelming victory for the [Goths](#).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Adrianople

If ever a battle of the Ancient and Classical worlds had relevance in modern day America, perhaps it is this battle, between economic and political refugees fleeing into the Roman world, seeking nothing more than protection and the possibility of economic safety, and the decaying Roman world filled with xenophobic views of the immigrants.

The Goths, fleeing Hunnic attacks came to the borders of the Roman Empire seeking “political asylum.” Once granted the Goths were exploited and stripped of all wealth in exchange for food (often rotten) until all they had left that was of value to the Romans was their children (goods to the Romans as slaves). Once sold, the Goths out of love of their children and fear of the future revolted and went on a rampage that eventually led to the confrontation of the two armies, and a massive defeat of the Roman forces and the death of the Emperor himself.

- According to the [historian Ammianus Marcellinus](#), a third of the Roman army succeeded in retreating, but the losses were uncountable. Many officers, among them the general Sebastian, were killed in the worst Roman defeat since the [Battle of the Teutoburg Forest](#), nearly four centuries earlier. The battle was a devastating blow for the late Empire. In effect, the core army of the Eastern Empire was destroyed, valuable administrators were killed, and all of the arms factories on the Danube were destroyed

following the battle. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Adrianople

This defeat of Rome opened the doors to many peoples from the North and East to enter and eventually to divide up the Empire of the West amongst the newly arriving people. The invasion and the impacts of these invasions are once again, too great to be explained in detail here, but to cite just a few of the events

406: The [Suevi](#), [Alans](#), and [Vandals](#) cross the frozen [Rhine](#) near [Mainz](#), and enter [Gaul](#). This marks the collapse of the Roman frontier in the West.

407: Constantine III leads many of the Roman military units from Britain to [Gaul](#), occupying [Arles](#) (Arelate). This is generally seen as Rome's withdrawal from Britain.

410: [Rome](#) sacked by [Visigoths](#), [St. Augustine](#) writes [The City of God](#)

439: [Vandals](#) conquer [Carthage](#)

451: Huns under [Attila](#) facing the [Romans](#) and the [Visigoths](#) are defeated in the [Battle of Chalons](#). [1]

452: [Pope Leo I](#) allegedly meets personally with Attila the Hun and convinces him not to sack Rome.

455: Vandals sack Rome

476, August 28: Deposition of [Romulus Augustulus](#) by [Odoacer](#): traditional date for the [Fall of Rome](#) in the West.

480: Death of [Julius Nepos](#) in [Dalmatia](#), the last [de jure Western Roman Emperor](#).

481: [Clovis I](#) becomes king of the [Western Franks](#) upon the death of [Childeric I](#)

493: [Theodoric](#) the Ostrogoth ousts Odoacer to become king of Italy.

494: Northern Gaul is united under Frankish King [Clovis I](#), founder of the [Merovingian](#) dynasty. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th_century

(Again let me point out that the success of the Franks is what leads to the survival and success of the Roman Church, since the Franks are among the few German tribes that become Roman Catholic and protectors of the Roman Church.)

Wave after wave of "immigrants" came into the Empire. The State was unable to prevent them from entering, but also unable to prevent them from establishing almost complete independent power bases. In a very short time, not only is Britain completely abandoned, whole sections of Gaul and Spain pass from the control of Rome to the Germans (who still nominally accept the existence of an emperor). North Africa, a major source of food for European Rome is lost to the Vandals. And on top of this chaos, the Huns descend in full force, seemingly concerned with nothing more than destruction and killing.

In a relatively short time, not only is Rome sacked at least twice by Goths and Germans, but most of the major cities in the West are destroyed by the Germans or Huns, including one of the most beautiful of the Ancient world, Aquileia.

- In [452](#), however, it was so utterly destroyed by [Attila's](#) Huns, that it was afterwards hard to recognize its original site. The Roman inhabitants, together with those of smaller towns in the neighborhood, fled to the lagoons, and so laid the foundations of the city of Venice.

For the residents of the Roman world, it must have seemed that the “end of days” were at hand and that the promises of “this world,” this Roman world, were no longer viable. First, they were denied the promise of economic advancement by their own rulers; then they are inundated by Germans and Huns: Death and destruction was all around them and the “state” could do nothing to protect them. Again, to quote Yeats “Sheer anarchy is loose upon the land.”

This conception of the lack of power over this world, may have led to a need for the power of the next world, and the power of the Church to define how to reach that next world was perhaps shown to the Classical mind most when Attila, despite the defeat at Chalons, a year or so earlier, (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chalons) was pressing down on Rome, after the destruction of Aquileia.

There was no Roman army or any force at all available to defend not just Rome but all of Italy against the “scourge of God” as Attila was known to the Christians. Attila, like the Babylonians coming upon Jerusalem, was therefore not seen as a free agent, but as a tool of God. However, Attila was stopped from the destruction of Rome by what appeared to be God himself. The Pope, Leo I (the Great) went nearly alone to meet Attila and the great Hunnic leader turned back away from Italy. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Leo_I The real causes of the retreat could have been the time of year (winter coming on), or that plague had broken out in the camp of Attila (both theories have been put forth for the retreat).

- But, Leo was quick to claim that God, through him, had forced the retreat. When Attila died the next year and the Hunnic threat fell apart in civil war, Leo's claim seemed all the more justified.

It is in this event (Leo meeting Attila) that we see for the first time the ability of the Church of Rome to truly claim to be the “true Church” and take leadership of all of Christianity. Of course, this claim was rejected, despite the events with Attila by all the other key centers of the Church (Constantinople, Alexandria, etc.)

So Leo claimed that Christianity, through him, had saved the Empire (at least for a short time). However, modern historians are still at odds over the role Christianity played in the ending of the Empire of the West: Some theories place much of the blame on the rise of Christianity and others reject that Christianity had much of an impact. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decline_of_the_Roman_Empire

- One thing that is clear is that during these times of crisis the population of traditional Romans and Roman subjects was declining, and some of this decline can be linked to Christianity.

There are many theories to why this population decline occurred (climate changes, lead in the water supply, stratification of population, too many slaves, not enough free peoples). One of the factors that no doubt added to the reduction in population is the Christian views towards sex and sexual relationships.

- And Christians were, for the most part, very much against sex; and related sex to, in part, original sin. Christians had adoration of “chastity” in women, with many women preserving their “chastity” even in the state of marriage, and also the tendency among males towards abstaining from sex and living in male communal settings or the precursors of monasteries.
- This combination of female and male activities (or lack thereof) could only have added to the growing lack of Romans needed for civil and military activities.

This reduced population, and a reduced number of men available for military forces (due to many Christians opting out of traditional roles such as the army, for lives of prayer) actually led to the massive increase of “barbarians” rushing in to fill the “economic” void created in the Empire, in all forms of activities, but especially in the army.

As a result in both the decline in numbers of men and the diverting of men into religious life, the later battles of the civil wars, and the campaigns of the Romans to repulse the invasions of “barbarians” were actually often battles between two different sets of “barbarians” with only a slight Roman veneer. In the critical battle with Attila in Gaul, it appears that the number of actual Roman soldiers, as opposed to Goths, and even “Roman Huns” involved were less than 6,000 out of possible 30,000 “Roman troops.”

- It was during this time period, of civil war and seemingly endless efforts against barbarians that the army became more and more disassociated from the “people.”
- As the army was mostly Sol Invictus or Mithraic or Arian Christian, in religious outlook, the “people” were less likely to support these religions in a reaction to their hatred of the military, just as their hatred of Diocletian may have attracted them to the Church.

So, it is only here in the last seventy-five years of the Western Empire, from around 400 to 475 AD, with the people “frozen in the status,” with the world (literally) falling to pieces around them, as city after city is sacked, with the army mainly made up of “barbarians” and with little hope for the “country” that we see that the majority of people appear to be turning to “Orthodox” Christianity (at least in a nominal fashion); or should I say those who survived the civil wars, the Germanic and Hunnic invasions and the destruction of cities.

As hope and options for success in “this world” faded, the conception of Christianity and its easy offer of blessings in the “next world” (just belief in Jesus was all that was needed) we are told by historians, took greater hold. And if the teachings of the Church were true, the people of time could reconnect with all their lost loved ones in the next world.

- But despite it all, there continued to be major resistance to “Orthodox Christianity” not just among the Arian Germans and Goths, but in the rural areas, and in what remained of the intellectual classes of the empire, who clung to the traditions of philosophy, if not the religion of the old gods.

So, even when Constantine took steps to promote Christianity and his sons attempted to legally outlaw Paganism and Theodosius actually did so, there was resistance to Christianity. Theodosius also ended the schools of philosophy throughout the empire, as well as the Olympic Games and then used force to repress the non-converted. Despite all this, we can see that even prior to the “endgame crisis period,” resistance to Christianity continued to be strong.

- The story of the repression, as we have noted before can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Ancient_Roman_religion) and can only be briefly outlined here. All quoted materials in this section, unless otherwise stated, come from this article in Wikipedia.)

The main ideas I want to present here in the next pages, are twofold;

- In this time period we see the use of state terror to create religious conformity, as used later by the Church during the “Inquisition,” actually has its origins here,
- And that the religion foisted upon the people, was a religion that was Christian in veneer only. The Roman Church had evolved into a morphed version of the Ancient religion of the Romans, with a great deal of Persian and Phoenician influences, as we have discussed. For the most part the religion was a modified Baal/Mithraism with a veneer of Jewish and traditional Roman and Greek aspects.

In addition, and as clearly as can be stated, this conversion to Christianity was largely based on fear; fear of the State and their tools; fear of the coming barbarians and the state’s inability to stop the “hordes” and lastly; the fear presented by the Church as the reason for all of this chaos - the fear of the devil.

We have already outlined the impact of the barbarian invasions. Next, we will examine (all too briefly), the fear of the state. After this, we will see how the fear of the Devil plays into this sequence and returns us once again to Ba’al.

Again, much of what we think we know about this time period, what the Christian-based Western education system has told us about this period, is mainly “popular wisdom” and therefore, mostly false.

For example, Constantine the Great was not really the first “Christian Emperor”; he did make the Church equal in status to pagan religions, and perhaps was baptized on his death bed, but he ruled as the leader of a multi-religious state. He did take some limited actions against Pagan religious sites, but mainly he left them alone. However,

- The first emperor to put restrictions on the practice of Paganism was Constantine’s son, [Constantius II](#). Constantius was an unwavering opponent of paganism; he closed all the temples and forbade sacrifices under pain of death. His maxim was: “Cesset superstitio; sacrificiorum aboleatur insania” (Let superstition cease; let the folly of sacrifices be abolished). ...

In the year 357 AD, Constantius II issued edicts which legislated against pagans, supported by state tools, that would in time become the basis of the [Inquisition](#). Yet, his efforts to bring about conformity also, like his father’s, mostly failed. The edicts almost started a religious civil war as the Pagans fought back.

- These edicts could not be rigidly executed due to the strength of Paganism. The violent over reaction of the Christians in the efforts to destroy the pagan temples required the Emperors to pull back somewhat in their efforts. He then instituted new laws protecting the temples and Pagan peoples.

Despite the efforts of most emperors and the Church over the next some 150 plus years,

resistance to Christianity continued. This resistance continued in the face of the repression, barbarian invasions and the collapse of the state.

In fact many Pagans saw the collapse of Rome as a result of the new Christians rulers turning away from “traditional values” and rejecting the “old time religion.” The hope of restoring Rome was still seen by many in the efforts to restore the traditional religion. In the very last days of the Western Empire there were efforts to put a “Pagan” Emperor on the throne in the hope of not only stopping the chaos, but as well to regain the love of the old gods.

Also, we should try to see the on-going resistance to Christianity in the politics of the day. For the next 150 years emperors and pretenders to the throne actually appealed to the Pagans for support with promises of restoration of rights and restraining the Roman Church.

One emperor actually restored Paganism to equal rights and status (The Emperor Julian actually allowed religious freedom and avoided any form of actual compulsion.) However, he died after only an eighteen month reign. Several of the next emperors (Jovian, Valentinian and Valens) continued a modified version of Julian’s efforts, and supported religious freedom and toleration. Therefore, it was not clear if the policies of Constantine actually would ever have led to the “Christian Empire” that most Christian historians tend to present as the impact of Constantine. The actions of many of the emperors were actually attempts to veer away from the absolutism in religion that was to come.

However, with the rise of Gratian <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gratian> and Theodosius and the influence of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, (the) period of what remained of religious tolerance ended.

- In 382. Gratian appropriated the income of the Pagan priests and [Vestal Virgins](#), confiscated the personal possessions of the priestly colleges and ordered the removal of the [Altar of Victory](#). (With this edict) the colleges of Pagan priests ... lost all their privileges and immunities. Gratian declared that all of the Pagan temples and shrines were to be confiscated by the government and that their revenues were to be joined to the property of the royal treasury. ...
- (In the same year) Gratian (also) renounced the title and office of [Pontifex Maximus](#) under the influence of Ambrose, declaring that it was unsuitable for a Christian to hold this office. (Although the Pope holds this title today)

Yet as a result of his laws, Gratian was quickly faced with a revolt from the outraged Pagans who raised a Spaniard named Maximus to the throne, because he was more sympathetic to the Pagan cause. For a time, the Pagans enjoyed religious liberty once again and many distinguished Pagans rose to important offices in the state... (However) in the year 387, Theodosius declared war on Maximus after Maximus had driven Valentinian II out of Italy. Maximus was defeated and executed and the anti-Pagan regulations of Gratian were apparently reinstated by Valentinian II.

So now, some sixty years after Constantine, in the year 392, Theodosius officially began to proscribe the practice of Paganism.

- Theodosius issued a comprehensive law that prohibited the performance of any type of Pagan sacrifice or worship, even within the privacy of person’s own home. ... Paganism was now proscribed, a “religio illicita.”

Again, the West resisted these laws, and in 394 ... and a revolt started, and ...

- The battle that ensued became, in essence, a battle for the survival of Paganism. The defeat of (the Pretender Emperor) Eugenius by Theodosius ... led to the final separation of Paganism from the state (and far more aggressive efforts to repress the religion in the West).

Even with the defeat of the pretender, Theodosius met resistance to his religious demands:

- Theodosius visited Rome to attempt to convert the Pagan members of the Senate. Being unsuccessful in this, he withdrew all state funds that had been set aside for the public performance of Pagan rites. Many Pagans, sensing how unprofitable it was becoming to not convert to Christianity, simply pretended to convert as an obvious instrument of advancement.

Repression of the State was not isolated to Europe, though. The “East” was more heavily Christian at this point, perhaps because Christianity meshed well into the older religions of the East, and therefore met with less resistance. However, violent actions against Pagans were carried out throughout the Empire. For example

- In 391, in response to a request from the Patriarch Theophilus, Theodosius I gave permission to destroy the Egyptian religious institutions and Christian mobs responded by destroying the [Library of Alexandria](#) (as noted the treasury of knowledge of the Ancient and Classical world), the [Temple of Serapis](#) and other Pagan monuments.
- Legislation was passed in 393 that sought to curb ongoing violence, especially against Jewish synagogues, however with the accession of Cyril, nephew of Theophilus as the Patriarch of Alexandria, new disturbances broke out that culminated in the illegal expulsion of Jews in 414. (The movie *Agora* does a more than adequate job of portraying these events.)

However, with the death of the strong emperor, Theodosius, in 395, the empire again fell into chaos, which the barbarians were quick to take advantage of by invading on an unprecedented scale. Some histories state that more people became Christian in the face of the invaders, however;



The remains of the great library of Ephesus, one of thousands destroyed or abandoned based on Christian repression of the Classical world. This one still has the remains of the inscription of it being donated to the people of Ephesus by Julius Caesar. Personal Photo

- During this disaster, many Christians became less certain of their religion and converted back to the old religion. Pagans, in their turn, became more aggressive and began to blame the Christians for the disasters affecting the empire.

Also, with the death of Theodosius and the new invasions many Pagans, hoping to create a “united front” in the ongoing wars, pleaded for tolerance. However, the new emperors, the sons of Theodosius [Honorius](#) and [Arcadius](#) continued the work of their father creating more anti-Pagan laws. Indeed, they used the power of the State to fight Paganism, almost as much, if not more, than they did to confront and combat the barbarians.

- However, as late as 400 AD laws against Pagans were deliberately not enforced. Even at this late time period, the Pagans, (despite all efforts) still made up half of the Empire’s population.

Though there had been a few years of increased tolerance in the attempt to create this “united front”:

- In the year 408, Honorius enacted a new law which ordered that all statues and altars in the temples were to be removed and that the temple buildings and their income were to be appropriated by the government. ...
- (Also) In the same year, Honorius enacted a law that prohibited anyone who was not Catholic from performing imperial service within the palace.

However, the political crisis accelerated, as in 410 AD, the Gothic leader Alaric took and sacked the city of Rome (mostly to collect past payment to his army that the emperor had refused to pay).

- This catastrophe shocked the entire Roman world. Both Christians and Pagans quickly began to blame each other for something that had hitherto been thought impossible. There was apparently a large amount of Pagan literature circulating at this time that attributed the decline and demise of the Roman Empire to the Christians; Augustine’s [City of God](#) is an answer to the charges of Pagans that the sack of Rome was due to Christianity.

Other than Augustine’s writing, little of this anti-Christian literature has survived, due to Christians who destroyed works they considered to be contrary to their religious beliefs.

In its dying days, the Empire still tried to enforce religious conformity, in a series of laws that seemed to foreshadow the coming of Hitler and the Nuremberg anti-Jewish laws of Germany;.

- In 416, [Honorius](#) and [Theodosius II](#) ordered that Pagans would no longer be admitted to imperial service nor would they be allowed to receive the rank of administrator or judge.
- In 423, Theodosius II declared that all Pagans who were caught performing the ancient rites would now have all their goods confiscated and be exiled.

- In 425, Theodosius II ... barred Pagans from pleading a case in court and also disqualified them from serving as soldiers.
- In the year 426, Theodosius issued another edict in which the essence of religious intolerance is proclaimed, making it illegal for Christian [apostates](#) to convert to the old religion.

Despite all the laws, and repression of both Church and State, lasting well over one hundred years, in 438 we see that:

- The Emperor explicitly admits that Pagan sacrifices were still seemingly being openly celebrated in places.
- (A new emperor) Marcian decreed, (and also had to issue a new decree) in the year 451, that those who continued to perform the Pagan rites would suffer the confiscation of their property and be condemned to death.

As with laws of Nazi Germany, as well as the American Fugitive Slave Laws of the 1850's anyone refusing to enforce these laws would also be punished:

- Marcian ... (includes) a fine of fifty pounds of gold ... imposed on any judge or governor, as well as the officials under him, who did not enforce this law.
- Leo I, who succeeded Marcian ... published a new law in 472 which imposed severe penalties for the owner of any property who was aware that Pagan rites were performed on his property.

Yet, resistance, and hope, continued:

- After the deposition of [Avitus](#), who ruled as emperor of the West from 455 to 456, there seems to have been a conspiracy among the Roman nobles to place the Pagan general [Marcellinus](#) on the throne to restore Paganism; but it came to nothing; also
- [Anthemius](#), one of the last Roman emperors of the West who ruled from 467 to 472, seems to have planned a Pagan revival at Rome ... The murder of Anthemius (by [Ricimer](#)) destroyed the hopes of those Pagans who believed that the traditional rites would now be restored.

Shortly thereafter, in 476, the last emperor of Rome was deposed by [Odoacer](#), (And still) ... the Pagans in what remained of the empire, in the East, made one last attempt to revive the Pagan rites.

- In 484, the [Magister Militum per Orientum](#), [Illus](#), revolted against [Zeno](#) (emperor in the East) and raised his own candidate, [Leontius](#), to the throne. Leontius hoped to reopen the temples and restore the ancient ceremonies and because of this many Pagans joined in his revolt against Zeno. Illus and Leontius were compelled, however, to flee to a remote [Isaurian](#) fortress, where Zeno besieged them for four years. Zeno finally captured them in 488 and promptly had them executed.
- As a result of the revolt, Zeno instituted a harsh persecution of Pagan intellectuals The failure of their efforts to restore the traditional rites led many Pagans to completely

lose confidence in Rome's future. These men believed that the Roman Empire was now gone and irretrievable.

- The subjugation of the Roman Empire to Christianity became complete when the (Eastern) Emperor Anastasius, who came to the throne in 491, was forced to sign a written declaration of orthodoxy before his coronation.

What we can see from this review is a number of things, including that centuries of religious diversity and toleration was ended with the rise of Christian control.

- Free will and freedom to explore religious options, the hall mark of the Classicalist, came to an end with the triumph of the Church, and its concept of having "absolute truth."

And, as noted the fights against "paganism" and against heretics took on a familiar look as the Church, which in its early days, had been repressed by the power of the state, now used the power of the state to repress its religious enemies.

- Under the Christian rule, though, there was no holding back, it soon became, convert or die. There was no way out for the Pagans, as the Pagans had offered to the Christians (just make a simple sacrifice, and you can worship the rest as you please). Unknown thousands died or fled the empire (many to Persia) for religious freedom; many took on the veneer of Christianity as a means of survival.

Perhaps we can see some of this Pagan/Christian conflict played out in a conversation presented in Charles Freeman's *Closing of the Western Mind* which took place in 383 between Symmachus the "Pagan" Prefect of the city of Rome, and the Bishop of Milan, Ambrose, in which Symmachus states :

"What does it matter by which wisdom each of us arrives at the truth? It is not possible that more than one road leads to so sublime a mystery?"

Ambrose replied:

"What you are ignorant of, we know from the word of God. And what you try to infer, we have established as truth from the very wisdom of God. (page 230)"

The Christians were so sure of their "truth," that they planned to impose this "truth" on all, and soon a system of state terror and "secret police" was established.

- Anyone who failed to display the required enthusiasm for the Christian God was dealt with severely. Charges were laid by informants. Perjured evidence was presented to, and accepted by, partisan tribunals. Confessions were extracted with the help of torture. Young and old alike were induced to implicate their friends and families. Many were executed. The lucky ones were merely imprisoned or exiled. In some provinces prisoners, exiles and fugitives from Christian intolerance were said to account for more than half of the population. Property was confiscated, and the Church grew rich. ... By the reign of Justinian (527-565) baptism was compulsory for all.
- All pagans, and indeed non-Catholic Christian belief was illegal, and the death

penalty was reintroduced. People were no longer free to chose their faith. Everyone was obliged to espouse Christianity, except sometimes the Jews, whom God was believed to have abandoned. http://www.heretication.info/_pagans.html

And all along this process, there were Pagan martyrs

Christian outbursts led to the burning of pagan libraries (such as at Antioch in 371-372 C.E.) and the execution of philosophers, such as Maxximus of Ephesus, and Simonides, burned alive. Chuvin suggests the murder of the philospher Hypatia by St. Cyril's thugs in 415 C.E. owed as much to local politics as to her paganism; but her paganism increased her vulnerability. <http://www.sdsmt.edu/student-orgs/tfs/reading/freethought/murder.html>

To the Church, the tools of repression, and the execution of non-believers, took on a very different meaning from the deaths of the Christians resisting Roman rules. The new power, the Church, could not allow these people to be killed in the name of their religion, or to appear like those people killed in the name of Christ, the martyrs. The type of death, or at least the meaning of their deaths, had to be different.

- The Church did not want to be seen as creating “saints” for a later new religion, a revised or rejuvenated paganism.

They needed a new way to explain how these pagan peoples were dying not just through a mistaken belief in the old gods. The Church had to give meaning to these deaths that could not be transformed into a positive. The solution was in line with the concepts early in the church, the concept which rose from Persia, to be subsequently transformed by the Christians. The concept was the Devil.

The Church determined that these people were not dying for religious freedom, or in preference for old, good gods, but in fact they were dying in profession of worship of not just demons, but in fact a super demon – the Devil.

- The conclusion reached within the Church was to define these deaths as the deaths of demon worshipers and the death of devil worshipers, but in no way martyrs for the gods of Rome.

Therefore, to the Church, and to the State, the deaths of the Pagans were not the same as the death of the Christians, just one hundred years before, because:

- The death of the Christians was to protect “truth” and not give into the devil and the devil’s ways (above all sacrifice) and those who died went to “heaven” to be with God and Jesus.
- The killing of the Pagans by the Church and State was to protect the people of the truth from the Devil, and his tricks. Those who died went to Hell and were condemned to be with the Devil for all time.

So, as the Roman world fell apart around them, the Church saw this political battle against the barbarians and the religious battles against the Pagans as really only one battle - the battle between the Devil and God. And those who did not support Jesus and God were in fact, openly supporters of the Devil.

This conclusion of the Church should not take us as a surprise. If we look at the early Christians, from a more modern psychological frame work, we could clearly say that they were a paranoid people; they saw themselves surrounded by evil, not just evil people, but active evil spirits.

It is quite clear from looking at the early Christian texts, that for the early Christians, even after individuals converted, which is suppose to mean, after they had become “monotheist,” the gods of the ancient world were still “alive” and all around them.

And as we have seen, the Christians saw these ancient gods were the gods of evil, and demons who offered nothing to the people, except success for their enemies, success for the Greeks and Romans and the ones who had bought into their lives the evil ways of the Greeks and Romans.

- In the beginning of the Church, the evil ones were the destroyers of the temple, and the exterminators of the Jews.

The early Christian writings were clearly calling the Romans the devils (666 = Nero) but this changed and changed greatly as the Roman state moved towards acceptance of this new paradigm offered by the Christians. This trend accelerated as the Emperors began to run the Church, and the Jews continued to reject the Christian’s view that the evolution of Judaism led to the worship of Christ.

- Soon, among the early Christians, the propensity to see Zeus or some other god as the symbol of evil expanded to the image of evil being associated with those who were not accepting of the religion. The evil one became one in the same with the non-believer, and those who rejected the absolutism of the Christians (including “heretic, “Pagan, and Jew”) The image of the Devil was the image of Ba’al.

In fact, the key focus of the Church becomes fear, fear of the devil, and as we will see, fear of the consequence of not fighting the Devil, or fear of abandoning God, or better stated, God abandoning the people.

All the events of the later Roman Empire were seen, not in the light of what we see as logic, but in this light of what the Church saw as truth:

- God’s new kingdom, the Roman Empire, could only survive the onslaught of the barbarians (and as the Babylonians were the agents of God for the Jews, so too were the barbarians) by purging the “City of God” or the Roman Empire, of the sins of the Pagan, along with their support of the Devil.
- Therefore, in the Christian view of the world, based on their view of what had happened to the Hebrews and Israelites, and Judeans, the attachment to the Devil was like the older attachment to Ba’al. We can see that these efforts of the Church to destroy Paganism, and the support of the emperors for this repression, despite the endless resistance of the people to the forced conversions, was based in a fear, that without their success, without the repression of the Devil, that like the Chosen kingdoms of old, this new kingdom would fall too. Rome too would be wiped away, just as God had wiped away the Children of Israel and Judea.
- We see this logic alive today among so many of the Pentecostal church leaders of that

claim that God will abandon the US (as it did Israel and Judah and Rome ... and so on) if we do not live by their understanding of the word of God.

So every barbarian success was seen by the church as a clear sign that greater repression in the culture was imperative, for more effort to combat not the invading peoples, but the “enemy within.” The idea of a “united front,” of working with the Pagans, was seen as a trick of the devil, and a means to sure defeat. The Church saw that the only way to beat the barbarians was to eliminate the Pagans.

The overwhelming motivating force of the State and the Church therefore, was not just simple political power and wealth, but the basic common instinct of survival; a concept of survival based in their reading of the Old Testament, a survival based in fighting God’s oldest enemy, Ba’al or as he was called by this Church, the Devil: And the greater the threat, the greater the reason to use compulsion. For as is written in the Old Testament, by the later prophets and the writings of the “returnees” that God demands obedience of all, and it is the responsibility of all to ensure that all are obedient. Therefore, the survival of all required the conformity of all. And without the conformity of all, God’s wrath would surely be known, again.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas –

Section I – The Challenge to the New “Old” Order

Subsection F- The Devil is Everywhere

To understand the premise for our vision of the Devil as Ba'al it is important to recognize that as noted, the early Christians fought for their religion, not by directly challenging the existence of the Ancient gods, but instead claiming that the gods of the Greeks and Romans, and all other peoples, were demons. So the old Greek and Roman gods were real, but evil. (No wonder then, that early on the Christians were not liked too well, and seen by the peoples of the classical world as rude, and a “public nuisance.”) According to the early Christians, the Devil, the chief of evil, was actually one of the many “gods” or many demons, and also as noted, the politics of the time made the choice of which one of the Ancient gods was in fact the chief evil, a delicate decision, indeed. It was important that the choice would not be too offensive to the Roman state.

And since there were so many gods, well, there had to be so many demons, and the Christians saw many, and saw them everywhere.

- In Mark 5 we read that Jesus expelled “legions of demons” from a single individual into a herd of swine. (That there was a herd of swine in a Jewish community seems awfully weird to me.)

Mark 5

- 11A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” 13He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Also in Mark 3, one of the primary duties of the apostles is to “drive out demons.”

- 14 He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15and to have authority to drive out demons.

But, again, we need to also understand that the very concept of an overwhelming evil one (the Devil) was not part of the thousands of years old traditions of the West, (nor really of the East) and was relatively new in religion. It may have been a welcome concept with the on-going crisis that confronted the Western world, however. The Christian religion was among the first to make this Evil One so central to the religion: One of the first, but not the first.

As noted also, the one clear place that developed this concept of an overwhelming evil god was Persia, and only within a repressed sect of the general Persian religion, the repressed sect of Zurvanism.

- The Christian concept is most likely clearly linked to the Zoroaster concept of the dueling forces of “good” (Ahura Mazda) and “evil (Angra Mainyu).”
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism>

And also directly linked to a repressed splinter group of Zoroastrianism, Zurvanism (see below and see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zurvanism>)

And, as we study this religion we can see strong comparisons to the theology of the emerging Christianity.

- [Zurvanism](#) was a branch of Zoroastrianism that sought to resolve the dilemma of the “twin spirits” of *Yasna* 30.3. (or chapter 30 of the holy text of the religion) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasna> The resolutionwas to have both Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu as twin sons of the First Principle “Time” ...
- Zurvanism’s principle feature is then the notion that both Ahura Mazda (or also know as (Ohrmuzd) and Angra Mainyu (also know as Ahriman) were twin brothers, with the former being the epitome of good and the latter being the epitome of evil.
- Further, this dichotomy was *by choice*, that is, Angra Mainyu chose to be evil: (Satan as the fallen angel, choosing to rebel against God ???)
 - “It is not that I cannot create anything good, but that I will not.” And to prove this, he created the peacock.
- According to ... (the legends) Zurvan (time) existing alone but desiring offspring who would create “heaven and hell and everything in between.” Zurvan then sacrificed for a thousand years. Towards the end of this period, androgynous Zurvan began to doubt the efficacy of sacrifice (Christian attitude towards sacrifice?) and, in the moment of this doubt Ohrmuzd and Ahriman were conceived: Ohrmuzd for the sacrifice and Ahriman for the doubt.
- Upon realizing that twins were to be born, Zurvan resolved to grant the first-born sovereignty over creation. Ohrmuzd perceived Zurvan’s decision, which He then communicated to His brother. Ahriman then preempted Ohrmuzd by ripping open the womb to emerge first. Reminded of the resolution to grant Ahriman sovereignty, Zurvan conceded, but limited kingship to a period of 9000 years, after which Ohrmuzd would rule for all eternity (the coming battle between good and evil?) See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zurvanism>

This “cult” was present in the Middle East for at least some 1500 years, and perhaps can be clearly called the origin of the Western concept of the Devil. The rise in acceptance of this ultimate evil force can be linked to the rise and spread of this new concept and religious offshoot of the popular Zoroastrianism. It can be argued that Christianity, with its strong beliefs in the Devil, and the struggle of the Devil for the souls of man, is actually an offshoot of this repressed Zoroasteric cult of Zurvanism. So, we can see Christianity as in part a morphed version of Zurvanism, as well as a morphed version of Ba’alim (through a merging of ideas).

We can see that this concept of the Devil, as an all powerful, all encompassing evil power, was actually really quite new in the West; and it was actually not part of Jewish, Roman or Greek traditions, or any of the Ancient Sky God religions.

- The [Hebrew Bible](#) (or Old Testament) does not assign this level of personification to a devil, but rather identifies all good and evil as originating in the will of God

- The biblical word *ha-satan* means *the adversary* or *the obstacle*, or even “the prosecutor” (recognizing that God is viewed as the ultimate [Judge](#)).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Devil

However, the concept of the “Devil” became a major element of Christianity almost from its inception (again showing a marked difference from the Jewish traditions). Prior to Christianity, we can see this concept of the Devil, translated into non-mainstream Jewish writing (primarily in the Essene writings).

From the Qumran documents (Dead Sea Scrolls) comes a possible indication of the development of the idea of a Devil, in the manner in which the sect personified all opposition to their ‘Teacher of Righteousness’ into a single figure. However the adoption of ideas from other religions, particularly from Zoroastrianism may have been a very significant factor. The basic teaching of late Zoroastrianism seems to have been:

- In the beginning there were two equal Gods, under one supreme Deity, eternally at war with each other (let us call them God and Devil). God, who was wholly good, had an attendant company of Angels, the Devil, wholly evil, a horde of Demons. God created the Earth as a battleground for the war, and man to help him in his fight. Man like God was wholly good, and suffered neither disease nor death. The Devil corrupted man, brought disease and death upon him, taught him the ways of evil. <http://www.users.bigpond.com/wyndkelm/Satan.html>

And we can see a new infusion of the concept of the Devil into some of the Jewish leadership.

- The Pharisees, which by the time of Christ were the most significant of the sects, accepted the expansion of Satan into an independent entity that had a substantial measure of control over the affairs of men and governments.
<http://www.users.bigpond.com/wyndkelm/Satan.html>

Among the Jews however, it was a new idea and not wholly accepted. However, the Christians, contrary to the Jewish concepts, fully accepted the Devil and transferred the Persia stories into their own versions: early Christian writings seem to feature Jesus morphed into the all good and never dying, Ahura Mazda, and the Devil morphed into the all evil Angra Mainyu.

However, the fact that this new concept of the evil one grew during the time of the development of Christianity, and was spread primarily by the Christians, does not actually help to “describe the devil.” In this time when all Gods had “public images” the Christians needed to develop an image of the evil one that could be presented to the world. Also, the Christians needed to have a description of the Devil’s environment, the very image of evil that would scare all those who heard it. And, it appears that this is how Ba’al becomes the “scapegoat” and the role model for the new Christian image of “evil.”

- With the very early Christians, what Evil looked like was not quite as important as many make it out to be, even today, since according to the beliefs of the early Christians, all this evil was about to end, anyways. Salvation (and the 1000 year reign of the Son of God) was about to come about, and very soon. As we have seen, the writings of Paul, and the very early writers of the Church, made it sound like Jesus’

return was imminent and there was a great need to get ready for this return quickly.

- So the choice was simple, Jesus or damnation and you had to make up your mind quick. Their “savior God” was returning very soon, and all that was needed to gain this salvation was to “believe in the Son of God.”

But when this return did not happen, among the many problems that faced the Church was now also added:

- What does the Devil look like? What does Hell look like?

The Church had several possible options for the new face of evil, the new face of the Devil (just as it had several options on the new face of Jesus) among the existing gods of Greece and Rome. However, politics and public opinion did play a role; while the Church did say the old Greek and Roman gods were really demons, it was hard for them to say that included the “big demon.”

The logical choice would have been Zeus or Jupiter, the chief gods of the Greeks and Romans. However, the Church could not go so far as to declare that Zeus or Jupiter was really Satan. It just could not work with the Pagans, or for many of the Christians themselves. There was simply too much cultural history there to challenge the old order to that great of an extent.

- And, also the Church was already claiming that God looked much like (a far less buff) Jupiter, so that image could not also be used for the Devil.

Therefore, the Church needed a new and clear model for the Devil. They had a few new writings, relatively early Christian writings, to help them form an image. *The Book of Revelations* came close to describing both, the Devil and Hell; but *Revelations* was a book in and out of favor with the Church for nearly 700 years before it was finally approved for the New Testament, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation , So, as a source for an image of the Devil it may not have been so influential in the 4th and 5th Centuries. However in *Revelations* the description of Hell as a fiery lake helped to give the Church some direction in describing Hell,

Revelations 9

- 1Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven (again the morning star being Satan) which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.
- 2He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

And the fate of those who do not believe in Jesus was this pit.

Revelations 14

- 10he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

However, this seems a bit confused since the people are not being tortured in front of Satan, but in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. Guess that was kind of over looked in future development.

But the Devil himself in *Revelations* is defined, or described in a few different ways:

In Revelations 12

- 3Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.

And also in Revelations 13

- 1And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.
- 2And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

But then there was another “beast,”

- 11Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon.

Revelations 20 clearly states that the Devil was the Dragon

- 1Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.
- 2And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;
- 3and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

We see that there were many depictions of what the devil looked like (dragon, lion, lightning) with the image of the dragon or great serpent being the most popular motif of the Devil in the early church. So how did the great evil one come to have the image that it does today, and did the Devil have this image since relatively early in the Church?

- After all, the Pagan world was one of images, of statues and of representation of the gods. So, these questions of how the Christians describe their place for sinners, was important. (If hell was like Las Vegas, many people could have opted out for that ... and the Christian image of Heaven may not have been all that appealing to many, then or now.)

However, in the other early Church writings, Satan is not really fully described, or even explained.

In 2 Peter 5 there is an effort to describe him as a lion:

- 8Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

In Luke 10 the devil is described as Lightning:

- “I saw Satan fall like [lightning](#) from heaven.”

The New Testament citations include actually only a relative few passages where the Devil is described:

- as the devil (from the Greek “*diabolos*” which means “*slanderer*”), the tempter of Jesus (*Matthew 4:1-3, Luke 4:2*)
- the prince of the demons, Beelzebub (*Matthew 12:24, Mark 3:22, Luke 11:15*)
- unclean spirit (*Matthew 12:43*)
- the evil one (*Matthew 13:19 & 1 John 2:13*)
- the author of all evil (*Luke 10:19*)
- a murderer and the father of lies (*John 8:44*)
- the prince of this world (*John 12:31 & 14:30 & 16:11*)
- a demon able to enter into a human body (*John 13:27*)
- god of this world (*2 Corinthians 4:4*)
- Belial (*2 Corinthians 6:15*)
- prince of the powers of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience (*Ephesians 2:2*)
- power of darkness (*Colossians 1:13*)
- an adversary, like a roaring lion who walks about seeking whom he may devour (*1 Peter 5:8*) http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_sat3.htm

As the early writers were still mostly Jewish, the concepts and images still remain mainly Jewish, (adversary, unclean spirit, and Beelzebub) and therefore vague.

The Church also had the older Jewish writings and looked to them as sources and again found little in direct statements (in the Old Testament):

- The Devil as an evil being on a cosmic scale doesn't appear in the Bible until the New Testament. This concept then continued to develop as Christianity itself grew and

developed.

- There is no evidence in [Torah](#), or in the books of the [Prophets](#) and other writings, to suggest that God created one being as the source of [evil](#).
- The Hebrew word used for evil is usually translated as 'calamity', 'disaster' or 'chaos'
- In fact, the [Book of Isaiah](#), Job, [Ecclesiastes](#), and [Deuteronomy](#) all have passages in which God is credited for creating both the good and the evil of this world. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Devil

Therefore, having a direct statement concerning the great evil one in the Old Testament is not to be expected, and in fact is not found.

The Hebrews, in Old Testament times, did not have anything like the Devil of Christian theology to blame for evil. If a man did wrong he alone was responsible, not his parentage, or his environment, or his upbringing, or poverty, not any Devil: A hard but honest philosophy. The word demon does not appear in the Old Testament and 'Devil' is used only a few times, and in contexts where it clearly refers to the false Gods of other nations, having no relationship to the Devil of the Gospels.

<http://www.users.bigpond.com/wyndkelm/Satan.html>

But the Church, in its way of reading the Bible, found enough to make its case; such as declaring that the "serpent" in the Adam and Eve story was actually the devil, and also they saw referenced in other texts not included in the Jewish Bible:

- The deuterocanonical [Book of Wisdom](#) says, "But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession, experience it." (Wisdom 2:24) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil_in_Christianity

So, the Church looked to the Old Testament as their source (not just for the predictions of Jesus) and came up initially with a dragon image (St. George and the Dragon comes from this concept) but this concept did not appear to really satisfy the need of the time (after all, the Classical mind wanted human-like images, the dragon or the serpent was not the right image for the time).

So the Church looked away from the *Five Books of Moses* to *Judges* and *Prophets*; this time, the Church was not just interested in showing that the words of the prophets predicted the coming of Christ (with some great literary license, so to speak) but in an effort to explain who was the devil and how he looked. And what they found was Ba'al, the long term ancient rival of God.

And in looking at the limited writings available, we see that there is this connection:

- The notion throughout the New Testament that Satan was the effective ruler of the Earth may have come from an identification of Ba'al with Satan. Baal was the fertility God of the Canaanites and had the subsidiary title 'Prince Lord of the Earth' <http://www.users.bigpond.com/wyndkelm/Satan.html>
- In ancient contexts, there appears to have been little, if any, meaningful distinction

between Beelzebub and the [polytheistic Semitic god](#) named [Ba'al](#). ... Jewish reference to Baal was almost certainly [pejorative](#), and grew to be used among other terms for [Satan](#). The name later appears as the name of a [demon](#) or [devil](#), often interchanged with **Beelzebub**.

- The [demonization](#) of the deity or deification is thought to have been one basis for the personification of Satan as the adversary of the [Abrahamic God](#), though other influences such as the Zoroastrian [Daeva](#) may have contributed.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beelzebub>

The Church fathers also could see that even in the gospels, there is a “clear” statement of connection:

- In Mark 3 the devil is referred as “Beelzebub” or a Greek rendition of Lord of the Flies (Ba'al of the Flies) and here we see the clear reference not only to Ba'al but the Jewish tradition of “demonizing Ba'al.”

The Christians taking on Ba'al, and adopting aspects of other gods, as the representation of The Devil appears to be nothing really new in culture. Even today we tend to “demonize” the “other” - who ever is our chief adversary.

- In [Christianity](#) writings, the name Beelzebub or Beelzebub may appear as an alternate name for Satan As with several religions, the names of any earlier foreign or “pagan” deities often became synonymous with the concept of an adversarial entity.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beelzebub>

But Ba'al had other advantages as the face of Evil. He was a god that could be traced back almost through their concept of time. He is present in the Old Testament and he is the god of the very Ancient Phoenicians that can be traced back to long before the “Trojan war” and into the very ancient of times of Babylon. Therefore, the argument that Ba'al had been around for what seemed to be forever, fit a need since it was the claim of the Christians that the Devil had been around forever (and was there with Adam and Eve.) Also:

- Ba'al was presented throughout the Old Testament as the true enemy of God and the worship of Ba'al was seen as the cause of God's anger at the Hebrews. Through these writings, this God presented the perfect option for the face of the Devil.

Again, we need to remember clearly here that the justification the Church has given since writings as early as Justin Martyr, is that any similarities between the Christian religion and other religions (the death and rising gods, or the sky god religions, or Mithraism or Sol Invictus or Greek rationalism, were created by the Devil to trick humankind away from the “truth” of Christianity. In fact, it is still the formal position of many Christian churches.

- They, the early Church fathers, said that the Devil knew of the coming of Christ since the beginning of time and that the Devil therefore created all these religions that included elements of the truth, but were not the truth so that when Jesus came to earth, the Devil's actions would confuse people and not let them understand that Jesus was the true Son of God (rather than all the other sons of God that were around including Heracles and so many others).

Baal played this role in the Old Testament as well, clearly leading the people of Israel away

from God, and presenting a false image. Therefore the Ba'al association with deceiving man worked based on this "precedent."

And, now we can connect back to an event already raised, the first great Eastern Rival of the Christians in the Roman World, and that, in fact, was Ba'al. Remember, this was the God of the Emperor Elagabalus, and the rituals of Ba'al were being revived. So, Ba'al was not just a god from the far distant past of the glories of Phoenicia, or the god of the great Roman rival, Carthage. Ba'al was an active challenger for the hearts and minds of the people of the Empire, and around 225 AD he was the preferred god of the Emperor himself.

Therefore the evolving image of Ba'al as Devil was appealing to the Western Roman citizens on many levels

- It did not depict a traditional Greek or Roman god as the great evil one.
- It showed the Devil to be the god of their old hated rivals, the Carthaginians.
- It showed the Devil to be the god of a hated upstart Emperor who was requiring the sacrifice of children in the name of the new universal god.
- And it showed the devil associated with burning and "hell fire" (as stated in Revelations).
- And Baal was the god most hated by the ancient Jewish prophets.

However, there weren't very many references to Ba'al as the image of Evil, in the actual writings in the Prophets. The Church converted what they could find into their own interpretation, including Isaiah 14:

11'Your pomp and the music of your harps
Have been brought down to Sheol;
Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you
And worms are your covering.'
12"How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,
You who have weakened the nations!

And to justify a "war" between God and the Devil, we find these words that were transformed by the Church to be the declaration of the Good vs. Evil events:

13"But you said in your heart,
'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
And I will sit on the mount of assembly
In the recesses of the north.
14'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.'

But God will win:

15"Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,

To the recesses of the pit.
16”Those who see you will gaze at you,
They will ponder over you, saying,
‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
Who shook kingdoms,
17Who made the world like a wilderness
And overthrew its cities,
Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’

While the literal interpretation of this text is a statement against the king of Babylon (a man who shook kingdoms, overthrew cities and would not let prisoners go home) the Church saw this differently; from reading the Prophets the Church found the most likely candidate for the devil:

- The God who was the most hated of all of the foreign gods; the one that the prophets “wailed” most against, the one that led people to false hopes, The “god” that “Hebrew” kings followed despite the warning of the prophets as to the anger of God for such actions, the one that required all forms of sacrifice including “passing the children through fire.”

The Church saw that according to the Old Testament, the role model for the Devil was none other than Ba’al.

Since Christ did not return, and the Roman world fell into one crisis after another, the images of the devil became more important. The Church, then, saw the chaos of Rome as a result of God’s wrath, for the people still loving the Devil. The Church moved more and more toward the Persian view of dualism, with the world being a battle ground between good and evil and since this was being played out in an all too real world setting, it was important to finally fully describe the Devil.

So while the Church could not describe the Roman gods as the Devil, we see that there was no problem in describing the Devil as the image of their chief other “foreign” rival, Sol Invictus, or at least as the model of the first Sol Invictus, that of the Emperor Elagabalus. As we saw, Elagabalus worshiped Ba’al, and was the chief priest of Ba’al offering the children in Rome up for sacrifice.

- So while the Roman gods could be called demons, the Christians could point to an imposed, and later, hated god of a deposed and hated Emperor, as the real chief demon, the real Devil; It worked in both scripture and in politics.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas –

Section II– The End Game, and a New Game

Subsection A - More and More Crises

Between the year of 475 and 775 or what are called the Dark Ages of the West, the Western Roman world descended into chaos. Whole areas were depopulated and education and “culture” almost ceased.

- For the formerly Roman area, there was in population between 400 AD and 600 AD, .. a one third decline compared to (the time period of)150-400 AD
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Middle_Ages

The Roman Church was on the verge of collapse; it had lost its major protector (The Roman State) and most of the new German rulers who were Arian, were attempting to force Arian conformity on what remained of the Roman and Greek peoples under their rule.

- *477 Death of Genseric, King of the Vandals and persecutor of Catholics. His successor, Hunseric, seeks to eliminate Catholicism entirely from Northern Africa. He assembles 466 Catholic bishops and gives them four months to apostatize to Arianism, or else the traditional imperial decrees against heresy (death) would be applied to them. Many trades are closed off to the common people unless they can produce a certificate of Arian conformity.
http://www.davidmacd.com/catholic/timeline_of_catholic_church.htm

Also, in the midst of this collapse, the Church of the West still fought with the Church of the East, over the nature of Christ and other factors, leading the Western Pope’s excommunication by the Eastern Patriarch (485).

What basically saved the Roman Catholic Church in the West, during this decline, was the conversion of the Franks, supposedly based on an incident similar to the one that led to Constantine the Great’s conversion:

- 496 Clovis, king of the Franks, converts to Catholicism. When his troops appear to be losing against the Alemanni at Strasbourg, he invokes the God of his Catholic wife Clotilda to give him victory. He is baptized by St. Remi, and brings the Franks to the Catholic fold, the first barbarian people to adopt Catholicism.
http://www.davidmacd.com/catholic/timeline_of_catholic_church.htm

This conversion broke the monopoly of the successor states’ Arian version of Christianity. Prior to this victory, most of the West was ruled by Arians such as the Visigoths (as seen with their Kingdom in 500 AD).



Ostrogoths Kingdom around 500AD

These Arian rulers were at first quite successful and were, in fact, well regarded by many of the surviving people of Rome and the Roman world; for there was a marked effort by the new German states to maintain the Roman traditions and governmental structures.

However, a long series of wars of re-conquest by the Eastern Empire, under Justinian ensued. Justinian destroyed the German Arian rulers of North Africa (the Vandals), retook part of Iberia (Spain) from the Visigoths and then defeated the Gothic kingdoms in Italy, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinian_I The eventual success of the Franks over other German rulers enabled the Western (Roman) Church to survive and eventually become the dominant force in the new German successor states.

Once reestablished as the cult worship of the rulers, the Church returned to the practice of forced repression of non-believers. For example,

- In 589, King [Reccared](#) (Recaredo) converted his people to Catholicism. With the Catholicization of the Visigothic kings, the Catholic bishops increased in power, until, at the [Fourth Council of Toledo](#) in 633, they took upon themselves the nobles' right to select a king from among the royal family.
- Visigothic persecution of Jews began after the conversion to Catholicism of the Visigothic king [Reccared](#). In 633 the same [synod](#) of Catholic bishops that usurped the Visigothic nobles' right to confirm the election of a king declared that all Jews must be [baptised](#).. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visigoth>

The period of new Church efforts to force convert and bring about religious conformity marked the real collapse of the “classical” world in the West, and led to the “dark ages.” For example,

- Bad weather, plagues, demographic collapse, decline of schools, education and culture were common features of the Frankish lands in the dark period of the 6th and 7th centuries. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Toulouse#418-508:_Visigoth_kingdom_of_Toulouse

However, even what remained was under constant attack, as there were seemingly endless new peoples coming into the lands that had been depopulated and “de-civilized.” These new peoples were non-Christians, and strongly attached to their religion..

- Justinian's successors [Maurice](#) and [Heraclius](#) had to confront invasions of the [Avar](#), [Bulgar](#) and [Slavic](#) tribes. In 626 Constantinople, by far the largest city of early medieval Europe, withstood a combined siege by Avars and Persians.

Into Italy came the Lombards, and their conquest and establishment of a new kingdom. Their anti-Christian stance almost ended the Catholic Church itself. But, again, as with Attila, Rome was not taken and over a hundred year period most Lombards did convert to the Roman Church.

- When they entered Italy, some Lombards were and remained pagan, while some were [Arian](#) Christians. Hence they did not enjoy good relations with the [Catholic Church](#). Gradually, they adopted Roman titles, names, and traditions, and partially converted to orthodoxy ([7th century](#)), not without a long series of religious and ethnic conflicts <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lombards>

So, at least in the West, around 550 or so, the only lands that were firmly Catholic were those controlled by the Franks. And even with the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholic rites, there were constant threats from new peoples who were either “fully pagan” such as the Slavs and Bulgars, or half pagan, half Arian, such as the Lombards.

By around 550, Europe was on the brink of not just economic and cultural collapse, but the Catholic Church, which seemed to have won a victory over thousands of years of religion, looked as if it also would pass away, with the other later Roman traditions.

However, the Roman Church did survive, mainly as a result of politics.

- By the beginning of the [8th century](#), these kingdoms had either been conquered by Nicene (Roman Church) neighbors (Ostrogoths, Vandals, Burgundians) or their rulers had accepted Nicene Christianity (Visigoths, Lombards). The [Franks](#) were unique among the Germanic peoples in that they entered the empire as pagans and converted to Nicene Christianity directly. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arianism>

Even with the success of the Franks, and conversion of the Visigoths and Lombards (and the smaller invading groups in Britain), the trials of the Catholic Church, and in fact Christianity in general, were actually just beginning as the dual forces of Islam and then the Viking Pagans would deliver a one-two punch that came very close to ending the Christian religion as a viable force.

Beginning in the 630's through 1000 AD or so, Christianity was under assault and losing almost everywhere. The forces of Islam came out of Arabia to take over half of the Christian land area (Middle East, North Africa) and most of Spain, in less than one hundred years. They also took Sicily and a good portion of Southern Italy as well as the southern coast line of what is now France. Their advance was checked in a single battle in Gaul (France). While that battle was seen by the Franks as a great victory, in the eyes of the Muslims it was a minor defeat and the "emptiness of the land" gave the Muslims little reason to return for conquest. The costs were simply not worth the effort.

- The battle (of Tours or Poitiers, 732) followed twenty years of Umayyad conquests in Europe, beginning with the invasion of the [Visigothic Christian Kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula](#) in [711](#) and progressing into the [Frankish territories of Gaul](#), former provinces of the [Roman Empire](#). Umayyad military campaigns had reached northward into [Aquitaine](#) and [Burgundy](#), including a major battle at [Bordeaux](#) and a raid on [Autun](#). Martel's victory is believed by some historians to have stopped the northward advance of Umayyad forces from the [Iberian peninsula](#), and to have preserved [Christianity](#) in Europe during a period when Muslim rule was overrunning the remains of the old [Roman](#) and [Persian Empires](#). Others have argued that the battle marked only the defeat of a raid in force and was not a watershed event.

However, in the Eastern Empire, the Muslims also came close to taking all of the Roman lands ending only with a major defeat in 717 under the very walls of Constantinople (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine-Arab_Wars) and the Byzantines were able to recover much of Anatolia, and hold it for another 300 years.

This is only a political recollection; we don't even include the fact that upwards of a third of the population of Eastern Europe was wiped out by the Plague of Justinian.

- The **Plague of Justinian** (541-542 AD) was a [pandemic](#) that afflicted the [Eastern Roman Empire \(Byzantine Empire\)](#), including its capital [Constantinople](#). It was one of the greatest plagues in history. The most commonly accepted cause of the pandemic is [bubonic plague](#), which later became notable as a cause or contributing to the [Black Death](#) of the 14th century.
- The number of deaths will always be uncertain. Modern scholars believe that the plague killed up to 5,000 people per day in Constantinople at the peak of the pandemic. It ultimately killed perhaps 40% of the city's inhabitants. The initial plague caused the deaths of up to a quarter of the human population of the eastern

Mediterranean^[10] New, frequent waves of the plague continued to strike throughout the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries AD, often more localized and less virulent. It is estimated that the Plague of Justinian killed as many as 25 million people across the world.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plague_of_Justinian

For our purposes, we need to understand that this near collapse of Christianity in the 7th and 8th centuries was, as the British would say “a very close run thing.”

The massive deaths through the plagues are followed by military defeats; the combination was nearly “the end of times.”

The first onslaught of Islam almost wiped out the Christian world. Part of the irony of this period is that the Byzantine Christians were in large part, saved by the Pagan Bulgarians, who interceded in the war on the side of the Byzantines, again, for political reasons.

- The Bulgars had no love for the Byzantines, but they were determined that, if Constantinople were to be taken, it should fall into Bulgar rather than Arab hands
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Arab_siege_of_Constantinople



http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/20/Age_of_Caliphs.png

The West was completely incapable of providing support to the Eastern Empire. However, a bit later Christians in Western Europe had a minor rebound under Charlemagne, the Frank; but the progress was slow and greatly resisted by the non-Christians, resulting in limited gains over many years:

- The **Saxon Wars** were the campaigns and insurrections of the more than thirty years from 772, when [Charlemagne](#) first entered [Saxony](#) with the intent to conquer, to 804, when the last rebellion of disaffected tribesmen was crushed. In all, eighteen battles were fought in what is now northwestern [Germany](#). They resulted in the incorporation of Saxony into the [Frankish](#) realm and their conversion from [paganism](#) to [Christianity](#).
- Despite repeated setbacks, the Saxons resisted steadfastly, forever returning to raid

Charlemagne's domains as soon as he turned his attention elsewhere. Their main leader, [Widukind](#), was a resilient and resourceful opponent, but eventually was defeated and baptized (in [785](#)). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saxon_Wars

Charlemagne's efforts in Spain were mostly a failure, and his "rear guard" was destroyed as he retreated (who's telling resulted in one of the most noted poems of Western Europe, *The Song of Roland*) see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Song_of_Roland

So, while Christianity tried to recover from disunity, invasions, plague and the Islamic threat and in the West unite under the leadership of Charlemagne, shortly after his death there was a new surge of Pagan invasion that yet again, almost ended the Catholic religion. Starting with the Vikings and continuing with the Bulgars, the Magyars and the Avars, these new invaders made the German tribes that ended the Roman rule in the West look almost like gentlemen; almost all of Europe was again nearly leveled by these new invasions.

We generally know of the Viking raids in the West and how they took over parts of France (Normandy) and how the Danish Vikings took half and later all of England, but we know less of the advances in the East. The Pagan Vikings not only took all of what is now European Russia (and basically established the Russian and Kievan states http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rulers_of_Kievan_Rus), but they also came closer than even the Muslims did in taking and destroying Constantinople (in a lightning raid in 860) and perhaps ending Christianity in the East. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rus%27-Byzantine_War_%28860%29 These "Rus", as the rulers of these peoples were called only became Christian around 970 AD, almost two centuries after first terrorizing Christian Europe.

In addition, there were other people who changed the demographics of areas and also changed the religion of Europe away from Christianity, and so many of these peoples came very close to destroying the Western Christian states, as well as Constantinople, and what remained of the Eastern Empire. These included:

- The Avar, who fought wars with Byzantine Empire for close to 300 years, and maintained a state in what is roughly now Hungary and Austria. They never converted to Christianity.
- The Bulgars, who moved into the Balkans around 640, and began a 300 year fight with the Byzantines; in which they took control of most of the European Byzantine territories and almost exterminated the former "Greek" peoples in the area. The Bulgars only became Christian in the 880. This conversion did not, however, stop the wars between the two empires.

Then came the Magyars who put so much fear into Europe, that they are the most likely model for the term "ogre" <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogre>) They first came about 900 AD, and again raided almost freely for more than a century.

- The Magyar leader [Árpád](#) is believed to have led the Hungarians into the [Carpathian Basin](#) in 896. In 907, the Magyars destroyed the [Bavarian](#) army at [Bratislava](#), laying [Germany](#), [France](#) and [Italy](#) open to Magyar raids. These raids were fast and devastating. The Magyars defeated [Louis the Child's](#) Imperial Army near [Augsburg](#) in 910. From 917-925, Magyars raided through [Basle](#), [Alsace](#), [Burgundy](#), [Saxony](#), and [Provence](#). Magyar expansion was checked at the [Battle of Lechfeld](#) in 955.

- Although the battle at Lechfeld stopped the Magyar raids against Western Europe, the raids on the [Balkan Peninsula](#) continued until 970. Hungarian settlement in the area was approved by the [Pope](#) when their leaders accepted [Christianity](#) and [Stephen I the Saint](#) (*Szent István*) was crowned King of Hungary in 1001. The century between the Magyars' arrival from the eastern European plains and the consolidation of the [Kingdom of Hungary](#) in 1001 was dominated by pillaging campaigns across Europe, from Dania ([Denmark](#)) to the [Iberian peninsula](#) ([Spain](#)).

The biggest threat actually was one that only came briefly and then did not return, the Mongols (who stopped the invasion of Europe to settle issues of succession and never returned). Again, the initial Mongol forces found little of interest or value in the devastated Europe.

What this little history is trying to convey was that the “Christian world” was anything but stable and successful. For nearly, 400 years after the ending of the Roman state, it was just barely hanging on and was under constant threat from Pagan and Muslim forces.

In addition, the Western Christians hated the Eastern Church and vice a versa (The final split coming in 1006). In these years of fighting for simple survival, there was no “united front.”

There was some revival of the Church under Charlemagne and the reestablishment of a Western Emperor (800) and the establishment of The Holy Roman Empire but these efforts failed to maintain stability as the successors of Charlemagne fell into internal fighting, and various new invasions occurred.

As noted in the book, *Religion of the Occident*, Western Europe, internally, had degenerated to the point that it most resembled India in the early stages of the development of the Hindu culture, some three thousand years earlier, in which the society was divided into four main groups

- The ruling religious groups dominated by priest
- The military caste
- The peasant caste
- The merchant caste

In addition, like Hindu India, Europe of about 600-1000 AD had its “untouchables” as well, namely, the heretics and the Jews.

As we have seen, in this era the Church gained real political power (as what remained of the State was weak and disorganized) and with that political power came a new campaign of repression and terror. As pointed out in *The Closing of the Western Mind* with the triumph of the Church in the West, and the focus only on the Bible as the source of knowledge, society degenerated into one dominated by superstition (over reason and science), where correlation was considered causation. The controlling view of the Church was that the Devil was present everywhere, and that the Church and absolute loyalty to its dictates was needed to prevent the Devil from dominating the land.

From this period of say, 500 to 1000AD, while the Church was in the general state of retreat, almost all of its success was based not on love of the message of Jesus, but either through forced conversions (such as the Saxons) or from political alliances and gains of the ruling elite

(such as the Visigoths). While the elite could change rites and “beliefs” to fit the moment, it appears that the impact of the religion was relatively limited among the “masses.”

- However, through fear of the rulers, and through the Church taking on almost all civil matters (including marriage, education, and support in times of famine and other crises) peoples throughout Western Europe were at least obligated to take on the veneer of Christianity.

As was clear in the earlier development of the Church, during this time when German tribes and new nations were adopting Roman church rites, the “pagan” cultures and beliefs were “morphed” into the process. Holidays and rituals were adopted to Church acceptance (the Yule log and Halloween just to name a few), and most importantly, more and more, God and Christ, became not Gods of justice, but Gods of battles; Christianity adapted itself to the warrior culture of the Germans, just as it had adapted itself to the needs of Rome. However, there were no real “intellectual classes” in the new German dominated societies, and arguments over the fine points of the religion almost stopped for some 500 years (until the calling of the Lateran Council in 1123).

However, once called, these new councils were not ones that mainly focused on religious issues per say, but on the power of the Church and control of the non-Christian populations.

[First Lateran Council](#), (1123); dealt with one of the pressing issues of the time, the question of the rights of the Roman Catholic Church and those of the [Holy Roman Emperors](#) with respect to the investment of bishops.

[Second Council of the Lateran](#), (1139); mostly repeated [First Council of the Lateran](#). Clerical marriages declared invalid, clerical dress regulated, attacks on clerics punished by [excommunication](#)

[Third Council of the Lateran](#), (1179); limited papal electors to the [cardinals](#) alone, condemned [simony](#), forbade the promotion of anyone to the episcopate before the age of thirty.

[Fourth Council of the Lateran](#), (1215); dealt with [transubstantiation](#), [papal primacy](#), and conduct of clergy. It also stated that [Jews](#) and [Muslims](#) should wear a special dress to enable them to be distinguished from Christians.

[First Council of Lyon](#), (1245); mandated the red hat for cardinals, and a levy for the [Holy Land](#). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenical_council

In this period Roman Christianity became the religion of the two primary castes (the priest and the warriors); however during much of this period the masses maintained the veneer of Christianity with a very healthy dose of their traditional pagan beliefs and festivals.

And the religion of the third and fourth castes, the peasants and merchants, at least in Western Europe, included elements of both the Roman influence which in some areas lasted some four to six hundred years, but also retained elements of their previous rulers (Greek and Phoenician) as well as Celtic and other folk traditions. Unlike Eastern and Central Europe which underwent extensive population changes over the hundreds of years after the fall of the Western Empire (Slavs, Magyars, etc), the West maintained much of its Celtic/Roman population base, although greatly reduced in size and influence.

- The first caste (Priests) was mainly from the old Roman elite.
- The second caste (Warriors) was mainly now German or Scandinavian (including Goths, Danes, Vikings, etc).
- The third caste (Peasants), were mainly Roman/Celtics.
- The fourth caste apart from Viking traders, were mainly non-European, but from areas that were at one point, Phoenician dominated (Jews, Moors, and other “Near Easterners”).

And of course, there were (Untouchables), who were the poor Jews.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas –

Section II– The End Game, and a New Game

Subsection B A Christian Rebound, - A New Round of Terror

Around 1000, the power of the new Scandinavian rulers in Europe was increasing, and that of the Germans was lessening; and the Scandinavians were mainly pagan or newly converted Roman Catholic. The conquest urge was still moving the Scandinavians on to new efforts (including their first wars with the Muslims) See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normans> The Church worked to harness the energies of these newly converted peoples with such futile efforts as the “Truce of God” to keep the peace in Western Europe (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_and_Truce_of_God But also the Church saw in these peoples a new source of energy for Christianity. The Church tried to channel the Scandinavians’ urge for war, and urge for new lands by creating a justification for wars (away from Europe); an effort to retake Christian lands from the Muslims.

The Scandinavians, or Normans as they became known in Western Europe (as opposed to the Rus of Eastern Europe) were ready to go on to more fighting, both against Christian States that were not to the Church’s liking and also Non-Christian states.

We are all familiar with 1066 AD and the Battle of Hastings and the Norman conquest of England (a fellow Christian state), and we are also all familiar with the Crusades, which had a great deal of “Scandinavian” leadership; but the precursor to the Crusades, and the foundation for the belief that the Crusades could be successful, was another war of the “Scandinavian” new Christians, the Norman war of Conquest of Sicily. This war (1051-1091) was the first major “re-conquest” by the Christians against the Muslims. Sicily, had been held by the Muslims for nearly 400 years.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_conquest_of_southern_Italy).

- It should be noted that under Muslim rule, Sicily prospered and was considered one of the best and richest places in Europe. The rulers maintained religious toleration, opened up new lands for farming, reintroduced Roman waterworks and created, as they did in Spain a prosperous and relatively free land. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirate_of_Sicily

The Church utilized the “Norman” spirit for a counter offensive against Islam.

- [Geoffrey Malaterra](#) characterized the Normans as “specially marked by cunning, despising their own inheritance in the hope of winning a greater, eager after both gain and dominion, given to imitation of all kinds, holding a certain mean between lavishness and greediness, that is, perhaps uniting, as they certainly did, these two seemingly opposite qualities.... a race altogether unbridled unless held firmly down by the yoke of justice. They were enduring of toil, hunger, and cold whenever fortune laid it on them, given to hunting and hawking, delighting in the pleasure of horses, and of all the weapons and [garb](#) of war.”

After the successful effort in Sicily, and then eventually in the Holy Land, with the first Crusade (1096), the Normans were instrumental in taking the remains of the Byzantine Empire. (The sacking of Constantinople in 1204 was part of the 4th Crusade and a “Latin

Empire” was established there for some 60 years.) The force of the Normans was being felt. And everywhere the Normans went, the Latin Church came as well. Almost all the lands taken by the Normans (excluding England), were mainly Greek Orthodox, not Roman.

- Sicily, mostly inhabited by [Greek Christians](#), was under Arab control at the time of its conquest by the Normans.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_conquest_of_southern_Italy

In these Norman conquests, the Greek Christians were either killed or forced to convert or exiled (although initially in Sicily there was some degree of tolerance) see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sicily . The slaughter of Greek Christians (and others) in Jerusalem and Constantinople by the “Crusader” Normans is legendary:

The writings on the fall of Jerusalem during the first Crusade state:

Once the Crusaders had breached the outer walls and entered the city almost every inhabitant of Jerusalem was killed over the course of that afternoon, evening and next morning. Muslims, Jews, and ... Christians were all massacred with indiscriminate violence. Many Muslims sought shelter in the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#), where, according to one famous account in *Gesta*, “...the slaughter was so great that our men waded in blood up to their ankles...” According to Raymond of Aguilers “men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins.” The chronicle of [Ibn al-Qalanisi](#) states the Jewish defenders sought refuge in their synagogue, but the “Franks burned it over their heads”, killing everyone inside. The Crusaders circled the flaming building while singing “Christ, We Adore Thee!” Tancred claimed the [Temple quarter](#) for himself and offered protection to some of the Muslims there, but he could not prevent their deaths at the hands of his fellow crusaders. ...

The [Gesta Francorum](#) states that some people managed to escape the siege unharmed. Its anonymous author wrote,

“When the pagans had been overcome, our men seized great numbers, both men and women, either killing them or keeping them captive, as they wished.” Later it is written, “[Our leaders] also ordered all the [Saracen](#) dead to be cast outside because of the great stench, since the whole city was filled with their corpses; and so the living Saracens dragged the dead before the exits of the gates and arranged them in heaps, as if they were houses. No one ever saw or heard of such slaughter of pagan people, for funeral pyres were formed from them like pyramids, and no one knows their number except God alone.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_%281099%29

Of the fall of (Greek Christian) Constantinople it is written:

- The crusaders inflicted a horrible and savage sacking on Constantinople for three days, during which many ancient and medieval Roman and Greek works were either stolen or destroyed. Despite their oaths and the threat of excommunication, the Crusaders ruthlessly and systematically violated the city’s holy sanctuaries, destroying, defiling, or stealing all they could lay hands on; nothing was spared.

Speros Vryonis in Byzantium and Europe gives a vivid account of the sack of Constantinople by the Frankish and Venetian Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade:

- The Latin soldiery subjected the greatest city in Europe to an indescribable sack. For three days they murdered, raped, looted and destroyed on a scale which even the ancient Vandals and Goths would have found unbelievable. Constantinople had become a veritable museum of ancient and Byzantine art, an emporium of such incredible wealth that the Latins were astounded at the riches they found. Though the Venetians had an appreciation for the art which they discovered (they were themselves semi-Byzantines) and saved much of it, the French and others destroyed indiscriminately, halting to refresh themselves with wine, violation of nuns, and murder of Orthodox clerics. The Crusaders vented their hatred for the Greeks most spectacularly in the desecration of the greatest Church in Christendom. They smashed the silver iconostasis, the icons and the holy books of Hagia Sophia, and seated upon the patriarchal throne a whore who sang coarse songs as they drank wine from the Church's holy vessels. The estrangement of East and West, which had proceeded over the centuries, culminated in the horrible massacre that accompanied the conquest of Constantinople. The Greeks were convinced that even the Turks, had they taken the city, would not have been as cruel as the Latin Christians. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4th_Crusade

Here was slaughter on a scale that was apparently loved by the Normans, and it appears to have been supported by the Church.

The slaughter was not restricted to Norman conquests; prior to the beginning of the first Crusade, there was a general slaughter of Jews in Western Europe.

- The crusaders moved north through the Rhine valley into well-known Jewish communities such as [Cologne](#), and then southward. Jewish communities were given the option of converting to Christianity or being slaughtered. Most would not convert and, as news of the mass killings spread, many Jewish communities committed mass suicides in horrific scenes. Thousands of Jews were massacred, despite some attempts by local clergy and secular authorities to shelter them. The massacres were justified by the claim that Urban's speech at Clermont promised reward from God for killing non-Christians of any sort, not just Muslims. Although the papacy abhorred and preached against the purging of Muslim and Jewish inhabitants during this and future crusades, there were numerous attacks on Jews following every crusade movement. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Crusade

The crusading effort was not limited to attacking Islamic lands in the Holy Land and Sicily, but included the retaking of Spain, or what is known as the Reconquista. These new efforts in Spain took on a more explicit religious overtone, than in the previous fighting (where often Christians and Muslims were allied with each other while fighting other Christian Muslim coalitions). With the "Crusading spirit," this type of intercourse ended, and the wars were very religious in nature. The winners were clearly the first and second castes (the Church and the warrior, with the Church even developing its own military orders as well.

- In the [High Middle Ages](#), the fight against the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula became linked to the fight of the whole of [Christendom](#). The Reconquista was originally a mere war of conquest. It only later underwent a significant shift in meaning toward a religiously justified war of liberation (see the Augustinian concept of a [Just War](#)).
- Later [military orders](#) like the [order of Santiago](#), [Montesa](#), [Order of Calatrava](#) and the

[Knights Templar](#) were founded or called to fight in Iberia. The Popes called the knights of Europe to the [Crusades](#) in the peninsula. After the so called [Disaster of Alarcos](#), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Alarcos French, Navarrese, Castilian, Portuguese and Aragonese armies united against the Muslim forces in the massive [battle of Las Navas de Tolosa \(1212\)](#). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Las_Navas_de_Tolosa The big territories awarded to military orders and nobles were the origin of the [latifundia](#) in today's [Andalusia](#) and [Extremadura](#), in Spain, and [Alentejo](#), in Portugal. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconquesta>

And for the next eighty years there was a slow but steady taking of lands by Christian forces, so that by 1300 (or roughly 600 years after the Islamic conquest) almost all of Spain and the Balearic Islands were in Christian hands. What lands that did remain Muslim (the Granada State), for nearly 200 years more, existed as vassals to the Christian overlords.

Now the newly conquered lands were ones filled with non-Christians; and unlike with the Normans successes, there was initially not a general slaughter or exile of non-Roman Catholics in the newly won lands of Iberia.

- With the long process involved (some 800 years between 700 and 1500), the history of what became Spain had resulted in populations switching religions in many cases, only to switch again based on the politics, and rulers, of the time.

So in Spain, the question of just being Christians, Muslims and Jews, was not that simple. The question involved, how long one had been Christian, and if anyone in the family had ever converted back and forth. There were “Christian” families with long histories and issues of religious “purity,” and they saw themselves as far better than others.

This issue of how the family responded to Muslim rule became vastly important in Spain (like the old Donatist controversy in Africa in the 4th Century). In fact, in Spain, what one's family had done in the past, was critical in determining the “status” of the individuals within the family.

Spain became a very stratified society based on religion, but also upon a given families conduct during a 600 year period. The Spanish developed new terms to describe the families' history; some of the groupings included:

The [Mozarabs](#): Christian in Muslim-held lands (who had held firm in their beliefs). Some of them migrated to the North in times of persecution.

The [Muladi](#): Christians who converted to Islam after the arrival of the Moors.

The [Renegade](#): Christian individuals who embraced Islam and often fought against their former compatriots.

The [Jewish conversos](#): Jews who either voluntarily or compulsorily became Christians. Some of them were [crypto-Jews](#) who kept practicing [Judaism](#)..

The [Mudéjar](#): [Muslims](#) dwelling in land conquered by the Christians, usually peasants. ... Their descendants after 1492 were called [Moriscos](#) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconquesta>

And converting to Christianity was soon not sufficient, families were examined closely to ensure that the conversions were “complete.

- Eventually when all Jews were forced to leave Spain in 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabella, and Portugal some years later, the long-term Conversos, and the descendants of the Conversos who accepted Christianity at the time of the expulsion became primary targets of the [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese Inquisitions](#).

Eventually, the Moriscos (whose number were far larger than the Jews) also became targets of the Inquisition and were also later expelled from Spain.

With this Crusading success, a far stronger Church, with a far stronger warrior class supporting them, began a much greater push for “uniformity” and the importance of “bloodlines” in Western Christian Europe. While the Church had always called for conformity, with the chaos of Europe and the constant invasions, the Church was not always in a position of power to do as it wanted.

- With the Scandinavian conversions, and the Norman surges, the Church’s power changed, and the push for conformity was renewed.

We see it not only in the first rush of the killing of Jews during the first Crusade, but also in the later expulsion of Jews from almost all of Western Europe. (The Spanish expulsions of 1492 and soon after Portugal, were amongst the last kingdoms to take action.)

A quick review of the anti-Jewish movements in Western Europe shows, once again, a link to Ba’al and the religion of the Phoenicians; attacks on Jews were in those days mainly started with the accusation that Jews were sacrificing children (or the “Hebrew” need to sacrifice children). The idea of the “Blood Libel” was that Jews needed the blood of Christian children to make matzos (the bread of Passover). Charges of Blood Libel were raised over and over. Human sacrifice accusations became central to the attack on the Jews (with some historical irony since as noted, the Jews of the Return from the Babylonian Captivity, or the Judaism of the European Jews, were the ones so set against this practice).

The Blood Libel was not always started by the Church, and the Church did take steps to try to stop the accusations:

1235

The Jews of Fulda, Germany were accused of [ritual murder](#). To investigate the [blood libel](#), Emperor Frederick II held a special conference of Jewish converts to Christianity at which the converts were questioned about Jewish ritual practice. Letters inviting prominent individuals to the conference still survive. At the conference, the converts stated unequivocally that Jews do not harm Christian children or require blood for any rituals.

In 1236 the Emperor published these findings and in 1247 [Pope Innocent IV](#), the Emperor’s enemy, also denounced accusations of the [ritual murder](#) of Christian children by Jews. In 1272, the papal repudiation of the [blood libel](#) was repeated by [Pope Gregory X](#), who also ruled that thereafter any such testimony of a Christian against a Jew could not be accepted unless it is confirmed by another Jew. Unfortunately, these proclamations from the highest sources were not effective in altering the beliefs of the Christian majority and the libels continued

While the Church was often concerned with the conformity issues,

- The kings and nobles supported the attacks to either gain the wealth of the Jews or to get out from under their debt to Jews (often using the wealth to combat the power of the Church).
- The masses of people, powerless and disenfranchised, were easily goaded and enraged to attack based mainly on rumors of the Blood libel (and to also loot the property of the Jews).

According to [Walter Laqueur](#),

- “Altogether, there have been about 150 recorded cases of blood label (not to mention thousands of rumors) that resulted in the arrest and killing of Jews throughout history, most of them in the Middle Ages... In almost every case, Jews were murdered, sometimes by a mob, sometimes following torture and a trial
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_libel_against_Jews

An abridged vision of these 150 attacks and political actions against Jews include:

[1236](#)

[Crusaders](#) attack Jewish communities of [Anjou](#) and [Poitou](#) and attempt to baptize all the Jews. Those who resisted (est. 3,000) were slaughtered.

[1240](#)

Duke Jean le Roux expels Jews from [Brittany](#).

[1242](#)

[James I of Aragon](#) orders Jews to listen to conversion sermons and to attend churches. Friars are given power to enter synagogues uninvited.

[1244](#)

[Pope Innocent IV](#) orders [Louis IX of France](#) to burn all Talmud copies.

[1250](#)

[Zaragoza](#): death of a choirboy [Saint Dominguito del Val](#) prompts [ritual murder](#) accusation. His sainthood was revoked in the 20th century but reportedly a chapel dedicated to him still exists in the [Cathedral of Zaragoza](#).

[1253](#)

[Henry III of England](#) introduces harsh anti-Jewish laws.

[1254](#)

Louis IX expels the Jews from [France](#), their property and synagogues confiscated. Most move to [Germany](#) and further east, however, after a couple of years, some were readmitted back.

1255

Henry III of England sells his rights to the Jews (regarded as royal “chattels”) to his brother Richard for 5,000 marks.

c. 1260

[Thomas Aquinas](#) publishes *Summa Contra Gentiles*, a summary of Christian faith to be presented to those who reject it. The Jews who refuse to convert are regarded as “deliberately defiant” rather than “[invincibly ignorant](#)”.

1264

[Simon de Montfort](#) inspires massacre of Jews in London.

1267

Synod of [Breslau](#) orders Jews to live in a segregated quarter.

1275

King [Edward I of England](#) passes the [Statute of the Jewry](#) forcing Jews over the age of seven to wear an identifying [yellow badge](#), and making usury illegal, in order to seize their assets. Scores of English Jews are arrested, 300 hanged and their property goes to the Crown.

1278

The Edict of [Pope Nicholas III](#) requires compulsory attendance of Jews at conversion sermons.

1282

John Pectin, [Archbishop of Canterbury](#), orders all London synagogues to close and prohibits Jewish physicians from practicing on Christians.

1283

[Philip III of France](#) causes mass migration of Jews by forbidding them to live in the small rural localities.

1285

[Blood libel](#) in [Munich, Germany](#) results in the death of 68 Jews. One hundred eighty more Jews are burned alive at the synagogue.

1287

A mob in Oberwesel, Germany kills 40 Jewish men, women and children after a [ritual murder](#) accusation.

1289

Jews are expelled from [Gascony](#) and [Anjou](#).

[1290](#) July 18

[Edict of Expulsion](#): [Edward I](#) expels all Jews from [England](#), allowing them to take only what they could carry, all the other property became the [Crown's](#).

[1291](#)

[Philip the Fair](#) publishes an ordinance prohibiting the Jews to settle in France.

[1298](#)

During the civil war between [Adolph of Nassau](#) and [Albrecht of Austria](#), German knight [Rindfleisch](#) claims to have received a mission from heaven to exterminate “the accursed race of the Jews”. Under his leadership, the mob goes from town to town destroying Jewish communities and massacring about 100,000 Jews, often by mass burning at stake. Among 146 localities in Franconia, Bavaria and Austria are Röttingen (April 20), Würzburg (July 24), Nuremberg (August 1).

[1305](#)

[Philip IV of France](#) seizes all Jewish property (except the clothes they wear) and expels them from France (approx. 100,000). His successor [Louis X of France](#) allows French Jews to return in [1315](#).

[1320](#)

[Shepherds' Crusade](#) attacks the Jews of 120 localities in southwest [France](#).

[1321](#)

King [Henry II of Castile](#) forces Jews to wear [Yellow badge](#).

[1321](#)

Jews in central [France](#) falsely charged of their supposed collusion with lepers to poison wells. After massacre of est. 5,000 Jews, king [Philip V of France](#) admits they were innocent.

[1322](#)

King [Charles IV](#) expels Jews from [France](#).

[1336](#)

Persecutions against Jews in [Franconia](#) and [Alsace](#) led by lawless German bands, the Armleder.

[1348](#)

European Jews are blamed for the [Black Death](#). Charge laid to the Jews that they poisoned the wells. Massacres spread throughout [Spain](#), [France](#), [Germany](#) and [Austria](#). More than 200 Jewish communities destroyed by violence. Many communities have been expelled and settle down in Poland.

1348

[Basel](#): 600 Jews burned at the stake, 140 children forcibly baptized, the remaining Jews in the city are expelled. The city [synagogue](#) is turned into a church and the Jewish cemetery is destroyed.

1359

[Charles V of France](#) allows Jews to return for a period of 20 years in order to pay ransom for his father [John II of France](#), imprisoned in England. After a few extensions, on Nov 3, [1394](#) his son [Charles VI of France](#) expels all Jews from France.

1386

[Wenceslaus, Holy Roman Emperor](#), expels the Jews from the [Swabian League](#) and [Strasbourg](#) and confiscates their property. On March 18, [1389](#), a Jewish boy is accused of plotting against a priest. The mob slaughters approx. 3,000 of [Prague](#) Jews, destroys the city's synagogue and Jewish cemetery. Wenceslaus insists that the responsibility lay with the Jews for going outside during [Holy Week](#).

[1391](#)

Violence incited by Archdeacon of Ecija Ferrand Martinez, results in over 10,000 murdered Jews. The Jewish quarter in [Barcelona](#) is destroyed. The campaign quickly spreads throughout [Spain](#) (except for [Granada](#)) and destroys Jewish communities in [Valencia](#) and Palma De Majorca.

1411

Oppressive legislation against Jews in [Spain](#) as an outcome of the preaching of the [Dominican](#) friar [Vicente Ferrer](#).

[1413](#)

[Disputation of Tortosa](#), Spain, staged by [the Avignon Pope Benedict XIII](#), is followed by forced mass conversions.

1420

All Jews are expelled from [Lyon](#).

[1421](#)

Persecutions of Jews in [Vienna](#), known as *Wiener Gesera* (Vienna Edict), confiscation of their possessions, and forced conversion of Jewish children. 270 Jews burned at the stake. Expulsion of Jews from [Austria](#).

[1422](#)

[Pope Martin V](#) issues a Bull reminding Christians that [Christianity](#) was derived from [Judaism](#) and warns the friars not to incite against the Jews. The Bull was withdrawn the following year after allegations that the Jews of Rome attained it by [fraud](#).

[1434](#)

Council of Basel, Sessio XIX: Jews are forbidden to obtain academic degrees and to act as agents in the conclusion of contracts between Christians.

[1447](#)

[Casimir IV](#) renews all the rights of Jews of [Poland](#) and makes his charter one of the most liberal in Europe. He revokes it in 1454 at the insistence of Bishop Zbigniew.

[1449](#)

The Statute of Toledo introduces the rule of [purity of blood](#) discriminating [Conversos](#). [Pope Nicholas V](#) condemns it.

[1463](#)

Pope Nicholas V authorizes the establishment of the [Inquisition](#) to investigate heresy among the [Marranos](#).

[1473-1474](#)

Spain: Massacres of [Marranos](#) of [Valladolid](#), [Cordoba](#), [Segovia](#), [Ciudad Real](#).

[Simon of Trent](#) blood libel. Illustration in Hartmann Schedel's Weltchronik, 1493

[1475](#)

A student of the preacher [Giovanni da Capistrano](#), [Franciscan Bernardino de Fletre](#), accuses the Jews in murdering an infant, [Simon](#). The entire community is arrested, 15 leaders are burned at the stake, the rest are expelled. In [1588](#), [Pope Sixtus V](#) confirmed Simon's cultus. Saint Simon was considered a martyr and patron of kidnap and torture victims for almost 500 years. In 1965, [Pope Paul VI](#) declared the episode a fraud, and decanonized Simon's sainthood.

[1481](#)

The [Spanish Inquisition](#) is instituted.

[1490](#)

[Tomás de Torquemada](#) burns 6,000 volumes of Jewish manuscripts in [Salamanca](#).

[1491](#)

The [blood libel](#) in La Guardia, Spain, where the alleged victim [Holy Child of La Guardia](#) became revered as a saint.

[1492](#) Mar. 31

[Ferdinand II](#) and [Isabella](#) issue [General Edict on the Expulsion of the Jews](#) from [Spain](#): approx. 200,000. Some return to the [Land of Israel](#). As many localities and entire countries expel their Jewish citizens (after robbing them), and others deny them entrance, the legend of the *Wandering Jew*, a condemned harbinger of calamity, gains popularity.

[1492](#) Oct. 24

Jews of [Mecklenburg](#), Germany are accused of stabbing a consecrated wafer. 27 Jews are burned, including two women. The spot is still called the *Judenberg*. All the Jews are expelled from the Duchy.

[1493](#) Jan. 12

Expulsion from [Sicily](#): approx. 37,000.

1496

[Forced conversion](#) and expulsion of Jews from [Portugal](#). This included many who fled [Spain](#) four years earlier.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_antisemitism

Over time, the attacks and punishments took on some form of ritual themselves. Soon there were five types of punishments “approved” against Jews;

- Distinctive clothing, limits on where they could live or work, loss of property or wealth, expulsion, or burning (at the stake).

These of course were only enforced if the Jews survived the looting, raping and rampaging mobs that often attacked the communities.

To the Jews there was also the “punishment” of forced conversion. To the Christians this was not seen as a punishment at all but as a reward, and the key to “salvation.”

It was not just against the Jews that this new effort at forced conformity was instituted. The Church was still fighting heretics and Pagans, and Christians of the wrong rites. The terror was used “close to home” as well. In Europe, there were at least four major religious wars: During this time there was:

- The Albigensian Crusades (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albigensian_Crusade,
- The so called Northern Crusades against Baltic non-Christian states http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Crusades
- The continuation of a nearly 700 year effort to re-conquer Spain from the Muslims <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconquista> and
- The Thirty Years War which took place during Reformation in the early 16th century, and was one of the most bloody wars of all time. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_years_war

This list does not even include the internal war within France between Protestants and Catholics, or the “religion based” wars in the East as Christian Europe tried to retake the Balkans from the Muslim Turks.

In these wars millions died thinking they died for the right and proper version of Christianity. Others died defending non-Christian beliefs.

Of course, during the rise and domination of the Church in Europe, prior to the Reformation, it was often unclear what the “right form” of Christianity constituted. In fact, there were often times when rival popes would appear, each denouncing the other as the “Anti-pope”, and condemning the followers of their rivals to damnation through excommunication.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Pope>. There were at least forty of these “Anti-Popes” starting around the year 200 AD and going until about 1450 AD. For some 200 of these 1250 years (or roughly 10% of the time) there were rival popes reigning and the “Orthodox” church was split on the simple question of who was the “Rock” and therefore who was the true “Vicar of God.”

- The worst of these periods was when there were in fact three popes all claiming to be the true pope. (1410 -1418); therefore during this period all Christians were being condemned to damnation by at least two popes at the same time.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Schism

Later, for centuries, Christians became so hateful of each other that they would often ally with their religious “enemies” or, at least accept the rule of non-Christians, to avoid rule of the “wrong” Christians. This can be seen in the later politics of the Roman Empire (the use of the Roman state to support either the “Orthodox” or “Arian” view (depending upon the Emperor), and the use of the State to attack such groups as the Nestorian Christians. But this internal fighting continued for centuries later, well past the time of the Western Roman Empire

- When the small Islamic armies first appeared in Egypt and the “Holy Land” they were able to take over the lands because they were greeted as “liberators” by the local Christians, who for decades had been persecuted by the Christian forces of Constantinople over a new dispute dealing with the nature of Christ (one nature or two).

Right until the end of the Byzantine Empire (the 15th century AD), the Greek Orthodox populations (perhaps remembering the 4th Crusade) were willing to accept Islamic rule rather than that of the Roman Orthodox Christians, or worse yet, converting to the Roman rite, to gain protection.

- When a late Byzantine, John VIII Palaeologus (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_VIII_Palaeologus) made a “Union Deal” with the Pope, upon his return to Constantinople, he was almost killed by his own people.
- The Emperors appealed to the West for help, but the Pope would only consider sending aid in return for a reunion of the Eastern Orthodox Church with the [See of Rome](#). Church unity was considered, and occasionally accomplished by imperial decree, but the Orthodox citizenry and clergy intensely resented Roman authority and the [Latin Rite](#) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire

However, what linked the era together, what had always linked the Christian eras together was this fear of the devil, and the fear of God’s wrath, based on non-conformity. All actions against Jews, Heretics, Pagans, Islam and other cultures soon to be encountered, were justified in the belief that they were to prevent God’s wrath and necessary acts in order to defeat the devil. Therefore to please God, killing of evil people was correct, and good. So acts that today we see as barbaric and insane were seen at the time as very much needed and justified; just as those who practice the rituals of Ba’al, of child sacrifice saw their actions

as very much needed and justified.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas –

Section II– The End Game, and a New Game

Subsection C - Burning As A Means To An End

This short and by no means complete history of the era from the “fall of Rome” to the final Christian victory in Spain (and a bit beyond) is presented to show us that despite the hundreds of years of State and Church terror (beginning with the laws against Paganism in the 5th century, through the internal repressions and Jew killings of the 15th and 16th Centuries) the main tactic imposed by the Roman Church was less than wholly successful.

And while the two top castes in society (the Church and the Warrior/Nobles) had fully adopted the religion (with a few noted renegades among the nobles) we still see the great influence of “paganism” among the masses, as well as the presence of a persistent “untouchable” class of Jews. And, if we truly look closely at the Church, we see that this organization and “creed” is really the continuation of the Ancient religions under a new guise. Within the core message (the only begotten Son of God died for our sins) we still see the particular influence of Ba'al and the religion of the Phoenicians.

However, what we now need to do is to look for a more guarded or morphed form of this Phoenician religion, deep within this use of terror, by the Church, to impose a religion on people. Again this guarded manifestation seems to take on two forms: one seen as the problem, and one seen as a solution, one in the accusation, and, one in the punishment:

We can see this Ba'al relationship in what appeared to be the primary issues that seemed to be at play in Western Europe during the roughly 400 year period between the time of the first Crusade to the conquest of Granada in Spain:

The accusation of child sacrifice (or the Blood Libel) –.

In addition, the process of reply to this concept of blood libel was

- Ritualistic Burning of Humans (to please God) – the punishment.
- **Blood libels** are sensationalized allegations that a person or group engages in [human sacrifice](#), often accompanied by the claim that the [blood](#) of victims is used in various [rituals](#) and/or acts of [cannibalism](#). The alleged victims are often [children](#).
- Some of the best documented cases of blood libel focus upon accusations against [Jews](#), but many other groups have been accused throughout history, including [Christians](#), [Cathars](#), [Carthaginians](#), [Knights Templar](#), [Witches](#), Christian [heretics](#), [Roma](#), [Wiccans](#), [Druids](#), [neopagans](#), and [Satanists](#).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_libel

In addition, the Church presented to the “masses” of the people of the time that the main conflict of their time was the same one that was presented to the “children of Israel” by the prophets of the Old Testament:

- Do you follow the laws of Yahweh (as presented in the form of Jesus, and the new covenant) or

- Do you follow the Devil (or as we have seen, God's long term arch rival, Ba'al)?

We can also see how the Church, during this time period, used other Biblical accusations, apart from devil worship, per say. Charges of "witchcraft" and "sorcery" bolstered the Church's efforts to keep people in line. Non-conformists, or at least enemies of the Church, were constantly being denounced to the noble/warrior castes as witches and sorcerers, in internal power plays.

- Unfortunately we can not go into the details of the use of witchcraft as a political tool within the scope of this book. We bring this topic up in order to point out that one of the most frequently used forms of execution of witches and sorcerers was through burning.

The blood libel, however, so frequently noted in the list of attacks on Jews as the cause for the destruction of the communities, was directly linked to the old conflict between the "Hebrews" and Jews, or better stated, the followers of Ba'al, and the followers of Yahweh during the period of Jewish exile and afterwards during the Maccabean revolts and the rise of Christianity.

- The blood libel was based, by reading of the Bible, on the belief that the Jews, needed to sacrifice humans as part of their religious rituals. (As noted, often the charges in these times were associated with the belief that the Jews needed blood for making the Passover matzo).

But regardless of the reason why the blood was needed, the accusations of the Blood Libel centered on the "sacrifice" of the child as part of the religious culture of the Jews.

This idea of the Blood Libel was most shocking to Jews, since they, in fact, saw that it was the Christians, their current oppressor, who focused on blood (the blood of Jesus) and the sacrifice of a son (God's only begotten son) as needed for salvation. The Jews allowed for none of this in their religion, (And as we have seen the Jews found the idea of human sacrifice as anathema to their religion, as it was an important rite of their most hated rival (Ba'al)).

So, if the act of child sacrifice was decidedly non-Jewish, why were the Jews so open, or should I say liable to such attacks? One simple answer lies with the fact that, because of the influence of the Church, these were very "ignorant" times, and in "ignorant times" what is not well known, or what is different, is greatly suspected and feared. Therefore, since the Jews were not part of the general forced religious community, and stood apart, they were subject to all kinds of speculations and accusations, the Blood Libel being just one of these.

In addition, there are other likely reasons for the attacks on the Jews and why the blood libel fit well into these attacks

- As often stated by the Church and others, the Jews, being the killers of Christ, needed to keep killing innocent Christian children, as they had killed the innocent Jesus.

However, this reason does not completely address the idea of the actual accusation that Jews needed to kill children (other than children tended to be seen as "innocent").

The real issue as based in this book, seems to go back to the belief that the Jews of the past,

as stated in the Bible, actually worshiped Ba'al, or, as the Church had come to define Ba'al, the Jews had actually worshiped the Devil, not really the true God. Since the Jews had not come over to Jesus, and the true God, the Jews still really wished to worship Ba'al, or the Devil. In the Church's interpretation of the Bible that was presented to mainly non-literate peasants, the Jews were associated with the killing of children, the murder of the "most beloved," the passing through the fire.

- Here, in the Blood Libel, the Jews of the time were being associated with the Hebrews of old; who, according to the Bible practiced the human sacrifice of children, and the prophets wailed against this action as the chief cause for the failure of the Jewish relationship with God.

Murdering is one thing (and something that was somewhat common in this age, especially murder of lower castes persons by ruling caste members). However, the crime of Blood Libel was not just a crime of murder; it was an accusation of sacrifice, so hated by the Christians, from the beginning of the religion, but ...

- More so, the Blood Libel was not only sacrifice, but human sacrifice, and as we have seen, according to the Prophets, human sacrifice was the crime that the Jews had committed against God, that had caused him to destroy the Jewish kingdoms, and to basically end the covenant of Abraham.

Therefore, the Christians saw the blood libel rooted in the conflict between the Jewish prophets and the popular worship of Ba'al as presented in the Old Testament. If the Jews still took part in the accused practice, denounced by the prophets, the Jews were putting all of Christianity at risk of God's wrath again (not just the small Jewish kingdoms of old, but all of Christianity).

- According to the prophets in the Old Testament, if the Jews had stopped conducting the sacrifices to Ba'al, God would be blessing them. Instead, the practice continued, and God destroyed the Chosen People.

Therefore, in the mind of those Medieval Christians, the whole of the Christian world was at risk by this secret Jewish practice as presented in the accusations of Blood Libel. As the Church of the time understood the Bible, it was still the collective responsibility of the community to punish those who broke God's laws, and clearly the practicing of child sacrificing for their religious needs, was the best way to bring down the wrath of God. Therefore, any and all actions were needed, and justified, to punish the wrong doers and to show God their love (by killing all those who did not conform).

- Since this sacrifice was so hateful to God, it was only through the conversion of the Jews or death of the Jews, that the society could be safe from God's wrath.

Based on the blood libel attack, for the good of the community of Christians, Jews had to be converted, and rejecting the conversion, the Jews had to be killed or at least expelled.

- As we saw in the listing of blood libel events, the top levels of the Church (or one of the ruling castes) did try to prevent attacks on the Jews. However, the impetus for the attacks often came from the lower clergy or the lower castes whose less sophisticated form of Christianity was more based on issues associated with the ideas of Christ sacrifice and the power of Christ's blood.

In addition, the focus on the blood libel may have also been an example of “Me thinks the Lady doest protests too much” (Hamlet) in the fact that these lower caste Christians, with their pagan religious remnants, may have viewed the blood libel as a reminder of their own attachment to sacrifice (to Ba’al or Oden, or other gods that required sacrifice). By attacking the Jews for human sacrificing they were in fact attempting to purge themselves of their guilt over their recent pagan past. And in the 1200’s or so, the “Nordics” who did represent a substantial group of the ruling class of Europe, still was only a few hundred years at best from human sacrifice as a norm in their culture.

- [Adam von Bremen](#) recorded human sacrifices to [Odin](#) in [11th century](#) Sweden, at the [Temple at Uppsala](#), a tradition which is confirmed by [Gesta Danorum](#) and the [Norse sagas](#). According to the [Ynglinga saga](#), king [Domalde](#) was sacrificed there in the hope to bring greater future harvests and the total domination of all future wars. The same saga also relates that Domalde’s descendant king [Aun](#) sacrificed nine of his own sons to Odin in exchange for longer life, until the Swedes stopped him from sacrificing his last son, [Egil](#). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_sacrifice

Unfortunately, we will never know what the true motives and fears of the peasant “masses” of the time were, since they did not write, and their thoughts were not recorded by the elites. So much of what we can say, as with much of this work, is only speculation. However, we can clearly see the link of the blood libel issue to the ancient conflicts between the Phoenicians/Canaanite/Hebrew/Old Jews form of worship and the anti-human sacrifice approaches of the post Exile Jews and of the Christians (since as we saw in *Hebrews*, Jesus was the last sacrifice needed).

The links to the past are not just in the accusation of child sacrifice, however. They also appear in the manner in which the Jews (and heretics) were killed and where that type of execution was carried out. The method of these executions harkens back to the conflicts in the Bible between God and Ba’al and therefore can be seen as possible Phoenician residue.

We really know quite little about the origins of “burning” as a form of capital punishment. We do know that it appears that it was used by the Romans, and adopted by the Christians, once they obtained power. In addition, it soon evolved into the only legal form of punishment for heretics.

- The Roman Emperor [Justinian](#) (r. 527-565) ordered death by fire, [intestacy](#), and confiscation of all possessions by the State to be the punishment for heresy against the Catholic faith in his [Codex Iustiniani](#) (CJ 1.5.), ratifying the decrees of his predecessors, the Emperors [Arcadius](#) and [Flavius Augustus Honorius](#).

However, with the ending of Roman rule in the West, the German successor states did not seem to follow in the harsh treatment of “heretics.” After all, many of them had for a long period of time been heretics (Arians) themselves. The treatment of the heretics reflected the German feelings and past, till the time of and even into the early Crusader period.

In the Acts of the Councils of the eleventh and twelfth centuries which treat the combating of heresy, there is never even a suggestion of capital punishment. Neither did any secular law before 1197 demand the death penalty for heresy. [Church History](#) by John Laux, M.A. published by Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. Rockford, Illinois 61105 <http://jmgainor.homestead.com/files/PU/Inq/pi.htm>

However, the Roman past was not forgotten during this time:

But there were Canonists who, basing their opinion on the Roman Law, the study of which was then much in vogue, declared that impenitent heretics may, and even should, be punished by death.

Church History by John Laux, M.A. published by Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. Rockford, Illinois 61105 <http://jmgainor.homestead.com/files/PU/Inq/pi.htm>

Then the change in Church policy came; mainly in response to “religious uprisings”(see below, the [Waldenses](#),) against the power and positions of the Church, but also in response to the “militant Christianity of the Crusading period” after confiscation and slavery were found to be insufficient to repress heretical ideas.

- Canon 27 of the [Third Lateran Council \(1179\)](#), presided over by Alexander III, includes the following for the treatment of ‘heretics’:

... As long as such people persist in their wickedness, let all who are bound to them by any pact know that they are free from all obligations of loyalty, homage or any obedience. On these and on all the faithful we enjoin, for the remission of sins, that they oppose this scourge with all their might and by arms protect the Christian people against them. Their goods are to be confiscated and princes free to subject them to slavery....

In [1184](#), the [Synod of Verona](#) legislated that burning was to be the official punishment for [heresy](#).

This decree was later reaffirmed by the [Fourth Council of the Lateran](#) in [1215](#), the [Synod of Toulouse](#) in [1229](#), and numerous spiritual and secular leaders up through the [17th century](#). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Execution_by_burning

The next move was introducing burnings of heretics as an official duty of the military castes, or the king and nobles.

At the Synod of Verona in 1184, Lucius, in agreement with the Holy Roman emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, decreed the excommunication of heretics and their protectors; after ecclesiastical trial, heretics who refused to recant were transferred to civil authorities for punishment—usually death by burning. Lucius’ synod activated the strict decrees of the third Lateran Council (1179) .

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At first, the target of the Church was not Jews or Muslims, but internal dissenters.

[Waldenses](#) or Waldensians were formally declared heretics by Pope Lucius III in 1184 and by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. In 1211 more than 80 were burned as heretics at Strasbourg, beginning several centuries of persecution. The Waldenses proclaimed the Bible as the sole rule of life and faith....

The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition Copyright © 2000, Columbia University Press, [Waldenses](#) <http://jmgainor.homestead.com/files/PU/Inq/pi.htm>

It should be noted that the Waldenses can be seen not only as a early effort at Protestant reforms, but also an early example of the a revolt of the fourth caste, the merchants, in an

effort to break control of society by the Church and the military (which is also a hall mark of the later Protestant reform efforts) (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensians>)

This effort against the Waldenses, the growing intolerance of the Crusading period, and with later religious uprising against the Church in supposedly Christian lands, led the West into a period of “State Terror” (with the Church, in most cases, claiming to be the State or a counterpart of the State) that is collectively called the “Inquisition.”

The extensive history of the Inquisition, throughout the world, can not be explored in this book to the extent to which is needed. (Please see <http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/inq/inquisition.htm#Theological%20foundations%20for%20the%20Inquisition> for an on line course on the Inquisition) But we need to return to the relationship between the punishments for the “crime” committed by those “heretics” that came to be the linkage to Ba’alism as promoted in this book.

To begin with, it is clear that the Church justified the establishment of the Inquisition, by turning to the Bible:

- The proponents of the Inquisition (and, amazingly, apologists for the action, since the Inquisition ended in 1834), point to both Biblical and theological sources for its justification. The biblical passages most often quoted by the early Inquisitors were from Mosaic Law, in the Old Testament (which seems odd since the Christians believe that Jesus replaced those laws, with a new covenant).

Deuteronomy 13 “If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you...and he says, “Let us follow other gods”...That prophet or dreamer must be put to death...You must purge the evil from among you.

If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, “Let us go and worship other gods”...do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him...You must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people. Stone him to death...Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do, such an evil thing again.

If you hear it said about one of the towns the LORD your God is giving you to live in that wicked men have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray...then you must inquire, probe and investigate it thoroughly. And if it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done among you, you must certainly put to the sword all who live in that town. Destroy it completely, both its people and its livestock.

Gather all the plunder of the town into the middle of the public square and completely burn the town and all its plunder as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. It is to remain a ruin forever, never to be rebuilt.”

In addition, the Bible goes on to say, these acts of destruction will be rewarded by God and the true followers will gain Gods blessing:

Deuteronomy 13:17

- None of those condemned things shall be found in your hands, so that the LORD will turn from his fierce anger; he will show you mercy, have compassion on you, and increase your numbers. <http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/inq/inqcont.htm>

Other sources from the Bible were given for justification of actions against peoples and individuals, for example, from Exodus 22:18 “Do not allow a sorceress to live.”

The Church also gained support from some of its greatest thinkers of the time for the concept of the Inquisition. Again, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas:

- On the part of the Church, however, there is mercy which looks to the conversion of the wanderer, wherefore she condemns not at once, but “after the first and second admonition,” as the Apostle directs: after that, if he is yet stubborn, the Church no longer hoping for his conversion, looks to the salvation of others, by excommunicating him and separating him from the Church, and furthermore delivers him to the secular tribunal to be exterminated thereby from the world by death... (“Summa Theologica - Vol. 3 - The Second Part Of The Second Part (Part I)” by Thomas Aquinas, p. 150) <http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/inq/inquisition.htm#Theological%20foundations%20for%20the%20Inquisition>

When looking at the Bible, the Church found that burning alive was of the two forms of execution mentioned in the scripture as legitimate for those who violate religious laws and rituals

- Capital punishment is a penalty prescribed by Biblical law for the commission of offenses that violate ritual prohibitions (such as deliberate desecration of the Sabbath) as well as laws regarding interpersonal relationships (murder, kidnapping, incest). The Biblical text explicitly specifies two forms of execution: stoning (*Exodus* 17:4, 8:22; *Numbers* 14:10) and burning (*Leviticus* 20:14, 21:9). The oral tradition includes two additional means—strangulation and decapitation. <http://www.jlaw.com/Briefs/capital2.html>
- It should be noted that burning was demanded for only two specifically mentioned acts (while other acts were punished by stoning to death).

Leviticus 20: 14 If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you.

Leviticus 21: 9 If a priest’s daughter defiles herself by becoming a prostitute, she disgraces her father; she must be burned in the fire.

However, the Christians’ interpretation of Leviticus and the Jewish interpretation was and is very different

- The Mishna in *Sanhedrin* (52a) also described the procedure for “burning” and stated clearly that it did not involve actual resort to fire or flames. Rather, an extremely hot object (or wick) was inserted into the mouth of the condemned individual so as to cause instantaneous death. Here, too, the objective was to cause death quickly and without mutilation of the body.
- Indeed, the Mishna concludes with a very revealing passage that condemns any court

that would put an accused to death with actual flames (*id.*; emphasis added)
<http://www.jlaw.com/Briefs/capital2.html>

The Church had one other reason for selection of burning as the method for dealing with heretics; it prevented the person from obtaining salvation at a later time:

- The Church considered the burial of the intact body as a requirement for final resurrection; burning prevented resurrection, and thus was considered appropriate for both physical and spiritual execution. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Execution_by_burning

We can, however, surmise that this form of execution was selected because it not only was painful and chilling, but it was associated with what was done in the rites of sacrifice of both animals and humans in the Ancient world. And it appears, that the impulse for the burning did not come initially from the Church, but from the “masses” who appear to have revived the ancient folk culture, of public burning of people to placate angry gods,(or to win Gods’ favor – one of the original purposes of sacrificing) morphed into the new Christian religion.

- During the Middle Ages the burning of heretics was not unusual in the two hundred years leading up to the Inquisition (which officially started in 1227/31 A.D.) Often, the burnings were instigated by secular authorities, or by mob action. One of the first known medieval burnings of heretics was by Robert the Pious, King of France, in 1022 A.D., who ordered unrepentant heretics to the flames. Mob actions in Milan in c. 1028, in Soissons in 1114, and in Cologne in 1143 resulted in the death of heretics at the stake, when angry mobs pulled unrepentant heretics out of ecclesiastical prisons. Thus, the idea of consigning “heretics” to burning at the stake was well ingrained by the time of the start of the Inquisition in 1227/31.
<http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/inq/inqcont.htm>

In fact some in the Church also resisted the concept of burning of heretics, but eventually bowed to “public pressure” even as it took up the issue in the later Middle Ages.

- The council in Rome declared that unrepentant heretics should be excommunicated, and turned over to secular authorities for punishment. Punishment was unspecified, but confiscation of property was explicitly allowed. Thus, one of the areas of greatest abuse in the coming Inquisition – the confiscation of property by Church and secular authorities – was officially codified by canon law
<http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/inq/inqcont.htm>

Growing efforts against the Church represented a rise in “evil.” The process was “condensed” as whole sections of Europe moved into “heresy” with the initial major contest being in Southern France with the Catharists:

- The Catharist ...believed that [Jesus](#) had been a manifestation of spirit unbounded by the limitations of matter — a sort of divine phantom and not a real human being. They embraced the [Gospel of John](#) as their most sacred text, and completely rejected the [Old Testament](#) — indeed, most of them proclaimed that the God of the [Old Testament](#) was, really, the [devil](#). They proclaimed that there was a higher God — the True God — and Jesus was his messenger. The God found in the Old Testament had nothing to do with the God of Love known to Cathars.
- The Old Testament God had created the world as a [prison](#), and demanded from the

“prisoners” fearful obedience and worship. This false god tormented and murdered those whom he called all too possessively “his children”. ... The dogma of the [Trinity](#) and the sacrament of the [Eucharist](#), among others, were rejected as abominations. Belief in [metempsychosis](#), or the [transmigration](#) of souls, resulted in the rejection of [hell](#) and [purgatory](#), which were dogmas of the Roman Catholic Faith. For the Cathars, this world was the only [hell](#) - there was nothing worse to fear after death, save perhaps a return visit to this world. (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathars>)

The Holy War released upon the Cathars was “biblical” in its approach and impact:

- The suppression of the Cathar heresy established new “standards” for ferocity for the Roman Church in dealing with its own flock. Perhaps the most famous example was on July 22, 1209, when the city of Beziers was sacked, with over 20,000 men, women and children killed by crusaders. The event will forever be framed in history by the words of papal legate Arnaud, whom, when asked if Catholics should be spared during the assault, answered “Kill them all, for God knows His own”.
- Wholesale burnings of Cathars were carried out during the Crusade, including 400 burnt after the fall of Lavaur in 1211, and 94 burnt after the fall of Casses in the same year. It was against this backdrop that Pope Gregory IX instituted the Papal Inquisition in 1227/31. <http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/inq/inqcont.htm>

Once a relapsed or unrepentant heretic was found guilty, they were handed over (or “relaxed”) to the secular authorities for punishment. This was not just a jurisdictional issue.

The Church had a motto - “the Church shrinks from blood” (*ecclesia abhorret a sanguine*). Based on this motto, the Church itself would not *administer* the death sentence. Rather, this was left to local secular authorities.

- The chosen method for administering capital punishment – burning at the stake, was partially chosen because it did not shed blood!

The families of heretics that were burned typically had their property confiscated by the secular authorities. In Spain, descendants of heretics could not serve in public office, couldn’t enter holy orders, and couldn’t become physicians, tutors of the young, or advocates (lawyers). <http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/inq/inqcont.htm>

The “Act of Faith” or Auto da Fe was held in public, typically in a town square or (in Italy), inside a local church. They were often huge public spectacles. In 1660, an auto-da-fé held in Seville lasted for three days, and was attended by 100,000 people. On June 30, 1680, an auto-da-fé held in Madrid lasted for 14 hours, and had 50,000 spectators. The longest part of the auto-da-fé was the reading of sentences. With often hundreds of convicted heretics, the sentencing could take many hours.

Once the sentences had been read, those sentenced to death were led to the place of burning (*quemadero* in Spanish). Those that repented after being sentenced to death would be offered the courtesy of being garroted to death before being burned. Those that refused to recant (often Cathar *perfecti*, Lutherans and Calvinists in Italy and Spain, etc.) were burned alive.

Those burned at the stake would often have ghoulish company. It was common

practice to sentence the dead to burning. The dead would dutifully be disinterred and placed next to the still living victims. As horrifying as this spectacle might seem, there was a pragmatic reason for charging, sentencing, disinterring, and burning the dead – the goods of their families could be confiscated.

<http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com/inq/inqcont.htm>

In Spain, the target of the Inquisition was initially not heretics per se, but the crypto Jews and crypto Muslims that had chosen to stay in the Christian conquered lands and to officially convert to Christianity. The Jews were called *Marranos* (meaning “swine”), *conversos*, or “New Christians” and the Muslims were called *Moriscos* (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morisco>) While the Jews were expelled in 1492, the non-converted Muslims lasted until 1502.

The *Moriscos* tried to maintain their traditions, and religion, but were increasingly attacked by the Christian Church. There were even revolts against the new rulers some 60 years after the fall of Granada and it wasn’t more than 100 years of trying to adapt and compromise that the Christians expelled all the descendants of the converted or semi-converted Muslims. Between 1609 and 1614 the *Moriscos* were expelled by the Spanish king; the numbers that left is subject to debate but are in the range of about 300,000. However, over the 100 year or so period when the religious toleration agreement between Christians and Muslims was violated, the number of Muslims who left Spain was perhaps ten times that number (or close to 3 million). And it should be noted that the *Moriscos*’s expulsion came more than 100 years after the Jewish expulsion and was at a minimum 3 times greater in number than the Jewish Diaspora from Spain.

The numbers of *Moriscos* brought in front of the Inquisition, over the life of that body was most likely greater than the number of Jewish *conversos*. However, this is not true during the “peak” period of the use of burning. During that period (1480-1500) more than 11,000 persons (of the eventual 35,000) were burned. The target was the converted Jew and the pressure was on these Jews to become real “Christians” and to stop attempting to maintain older traditions

- 1391 Mobs murder up to 50,000 Jews throughout the Spanish kingdom
- 1478 Sixtus IV issues bull authorizing Ferdinand and Isabella to appoint an inquisitorial board
- 1480 Ferdinand and Isabella appoint first two Inquisitors – for district of Seville
- 1481 First auto-da-fé occurs – 6 people burned alive in Seville. 298 were burned by the end of the year. (Durant, Reformation, p. 213)

- 1482 Seven additional Inquisitors named, including Tomas Torquemada
- 1483 Inquisition put under control of government agency named the *Suprema*; Tomas Torquemada appointed Inquisitor General for all of Spain
- March 30, 1492 All unbaptized Jews ejected from Spain – 50,000 accepted conversion, 100,000-200,000 left
- 1502 Edict of Expulsion for Moslems – baptism or exile
- 1519 First Spanish Inquisitors appointed for the American colonies
- 1528 First Act of Faith in the New World (Mexico City)
- 1531 Inquisition established in Portugal
- 1540 First Protestant victim of the Spanish Inquisition, Francisco de San Roman, burned at stake
- Sept. 24, 1559 14 Lutherans burned at the stake in Seville
- 1560 First English subjects brought before the Inquisition
- June 17, 1565 22 Lutherans burned in Toledo – 11 alive
- 1604 Treaty of London forbids subjects of the King of England from being persecuted for matters of conscience within the realm of the King of Spain, provided they did not cause public

scandal

- 1615 Deportation of Muslims completed – estimated at between 300,000 – 3,000,000
- 1660 Auto-da-fé held in Seville – lasted 3 days, attended by 100,000 people
- June 30, 1680 Auto-da-fé held in Madrid – lasted for 14 hours; 50,000 spectators; 51 were relaxed, either in person or effigy
- 1721 96-year old woman, Maria Barbara Carillo burned alive in Madrid**

So, in Spain, in this time of the 15-17th Centuries, we have mass public procedures in which the god of the land is placated through ritualistic killings during mass public ceremonies.

- The process includes public burnings of people.

Here we can visualize that this practice, while on a grander scale, and with slightly different “victims” and a slightly different concept, still appears to be almost the same religious ceremonies carried out for the same basic reason as those practiced some 2000-3000 years earlier by a previous “great culture” in the same locations, the Phoenicians.

The Auto de Fe, or at least the public burning of people at the ending of the Auto de Fe process, clearly continues the traditions of the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians who had previously held the lands of the Iberian peninsula. The dominant cultural influence on this ritual process was not the Greeks or Romans who had replaced the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, but these more ancient peoples. As we have discussed, their concept that sacrificing of humans, in time of crisis, was critical to the success of the overall community.

This Auto de Fe process and its end results seem more like a loud shout from the past, instead of a mere echo. Both the folk culture and the return to the process of pleasing God through burning of people in his honor had apparently made a full scale come back on the Iberian peninsula.

The sacrifice to Ba'al and the Auto de Fe ... are they unrelated; or cultural echos of each other? Note that in the painting of Auto de Fe those about to be burned are portrayed as almost children, in size to all the others.



Part V – The Morphing of Ideas –

Section II– The End Game, and a New Game

Subsection D - The Descent into Hell

The use of state terror for religious conformity seemed to the people (or the Church leadership of the time) as an absolute necessity; as noted, all acts of state terror were instituted based on some kind of necessity. Here, in Europe of this time, the leadership saw the crisis of terror as one of the most important ever, to prevent the wrath of God from returning.

- Again, the need for conformity, this fear of the wrath of God, was greatly based in the same concepts of the Returnee Jews and the Hasimondian kingdom in that God's wrath was only diverted and avoided by all peoples in the area conforming completely to God's laws. Acceptance of divergence of any kind by the collective community could also lead to God's destruction of the people.

However, despite all the measures, it appeared to the people of the time that God's wrath was continuing to fall on them. To see this reasoning, to understand the terror of the Church (meaning this time why the Church was afraid) we actually need to cover the time frame from the 1200's through the 1650's with the ending of the Thirty Years War. During this time, as the world seemed to crumble around the Church, its use of terror increased as the resistance of the people increased in direct proportion, leading only to greater conflicts and more state terror. And still the wrath of God seemed to continue. The horrors of the time seemed unabated, and the "solution" of the time seemed to be kill and torture more, hoping to gain conformity and gain God's blessings.

The Thirty Years War was a manifestation of the resistance to conformity. As literacy developed, and people read the Bible for themselves, many people saw that the conformity presented by the Church was not based on the concepts they found in the Bible. In this era, we find incredible destruction of people, in the name of religion.

- During the war, [Germany](#)'s population was reduced by 30%; in the territory of [Brandenburg](#), the losses had amounted to half, while in some areas an estimated two thirds of the population perished. Germany's male population was reduced by almost half. Population of the [Czech lands](#) declined by a third. The [Swedish](#) armies alone destroyed 2,000 castles, 18,000 villages and 1,500 towns in Germany, the number represented one-third of all German towns.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years_war

But the Thirty Years War was only the ending of this period of death, chaos and terror that swept Europe. The bloodshed spread to the newly discovered Americas and soon to Africa as well (through the advent of the modern slave trade). So, once again, to try to understand how it appeared that God's wrath was continuing to be felt, how the Church saw the need to prevent even greater disasters (through agents of God, as the Assyrians and Babylonians were seen as the agents of God,) we need to have another walkthrough of history from the 14th through the 17th centuries, just to get a taste of what happened

The transition from the [Medieval Warm Period](#) to the [Little Ice Age](#) (and as a result) the

[Great Famine of 1315-1317](#) kills millions of people in [Europe](#) .

Beginning of the [Ottoman Empire](#), early expansion into the [Balkans](#) (no Christian army is able to stand up to the Ottoman wave of conquest).

[Battle of Kosovo](#) in 1389 between Serbs and Ottoman Turks, [Prince Lazar](#), sultan [Murat I](#) and [Miloš Obilić](#) were killed.

The [Hundred Years' War](#) begins when [Edward III](#) of [England](#) lays claim to the [French](#) throne in [1337](#).

[Black Death](#) kills almost half of the population of Europe. ([1347](#) - [1351](#))

The [heresy](#) of [Lollardy](#) rises in [England](#).

The [Great Schism of the West](#) begins in [1378](#), eventually leading to 3 simultaneous [popes](#).

[Peasants' Revolt](#) in England.

[1420-34: Hussite Wars](#) in [Bohemia](#).

[1429: Joan of Arc](#) ends the [Siege of Orléans](#) and turns the tide of the [Hundred Years' War](#).

[1453: The Fall of Constantinople](#) marks the end of the [Byzantine Empire](#).

[1454-66: After defeating the Teutonic Knights in the Thirteen Years' War](#), Poland annexes [Royal Prussia](#).

[1455-85: Wars of the Roses](#) - English civil war between the House of York and the House of Lancaster.

[1456: The Siege of Belgrade](#) halts the Ottoman's advance into Europe.

[1481: Spanish Inquisition](#) begins.

[1492: Boabdil's](#) surrender of [Granada](#) marks the end of the [Reconquista](#) and [Al-Andalus](#).

[1492: Jews](#) expelled from [Spain](#).

[1492: Christopher Columbus](#) founds Spain's first [New World](#) colony on [Hispaniola](#).

[1494: Spain and Portugal](#) sign the [Treaty of Tordesillas](#) and agree to divide the World outside of Europe between themselves.

[1494-1559: The Italian Wars](#) lead to the downfall of the [Italian city-states](#).

[1497-1499: Vasco da Gama's](#) first voyage from [Europe](#) to [India](#) and back.

[1517: The Protestant Reformation](#) begins when [Martin Luther](#) posts his [95 Theses](#) in [Saxony](#).

[1519-21: Hernán Cortés](#) leads the [Spanish conquest of Mexico](#).

[1520-66](#): The reign of [Suleiman the Magnificent](#) marks the zenith of the [Ottoman Empire](#).

[1521](#): [Belgrade](#) is captured by the Ottoman Empire.

[1524-25](#): [Peasants' War](#) in the [Holy Roman Empire](#).

[1526](#): The Ottomans conquer the [Kingdom of Hungary](#) at the [Battle of Mohács](#).

[1527](#): [Sack of Rome](#) is considered the end of the [Italian Renaissance](#).

[1529](#): The [Siege of Vienna](#) marks the Ottoman Empire's furthest advance into Europe.

[1531-32](#): The [Church of England](#) breaks away from the [Roman Catholic Church](#) and recognizes [King Henry VIII](#) as the head of the Church.

[1534](#): The Ottomans capture [Baghdad](#).

[1550-1551](#): [Valladolid debate](#) concerning the existence of souls in [Amerindians](#)

[1556](#): [Pomponio Algerio](#), radical theologian, is executed by boiling in oil as part of the [Roman inquisition](#).

[1558-83](#): [Livonian War](#) between Poland, Grand Principality of Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark and Russia.

[1561](#): [Guido de Bres](#) draws up the [Belgic Confession](#) of Protestant faith.

[1562-98](#): [French Wars of Religion](#) between [Catholics](#) and [Huguenots](#).

[1562](#): [Massacre of Wassy](#) and [Battle of Dreux](#) in the [French Wars of Religion](#). [1566-1648](#): [Eighty Years' War](#) between Spain and the [Netherlands](#).

[1571](#): [Pope Pius V](#) completes the [Holy League](#) as a united front against the [Ottoman Turks](#).

[1571](#): The [Holy League](#) defeats a force of [Ottoman](#) galleys in the [Battle of Lepanto](#).

[1572](#): [Brielle](#) is taken from [Habsburg Spain](#) by Protestant [Watergeuzen](#) in the [Capture of Brielle](#), in the [Eighty Years' War](#).

[1572](#): [Catherine de' Medici](#) instigates the [St. Bartholomew's Day massacre](#) which takes the lives of Protestant leader [Gaspard de Coligny](#) and thousands of [Huguenots](#). The violence spreads from Paris to other cities and the countryside. [1585-1604](#): The [Anglo-Spanish War](#) is fought on both sides of the Atlantic.

[1588](#): England repulses the [Spanish Armada](#).

[1589](#): Spain repulses the [English Armada](#).

[1598](#): The [Edict of Nantes](#) ended the [French Wars of Religion](#).

[1598-1613](#): Russia descends into anarchy during the [Time of Troubles](#).

[1613](#): The [Time of Troubles](#) in [Russia](#) ends with the establishment of the [House of](#)

[Romanov](#) which rules until [1917](#).

[1614](#): [James I of England](#) dissolves the [Addled Parliament](#) for failing to pass legislation or new taxes.

[1614](#): [Cardinal Richelieu](#) dissolves the [States-General](#), thereby concentrating power in the hands of [Louis XIII](#).

[1618](#): The Bohemian Revolt precipitates the [Thirty Years' War](#) which devastates [Central Europe](#) in the years [1618-48](#). Starting from a dispute over Protestant churches on Catholic land, the Protestant churches are torched or closed, leading to a protest in [Prague](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centuries>

Therefore, this time period seems one of almost uninterrupted crises and near defeats of the Christian Church. During this time, the discovery of the Americas and the conquest of the major cultures brought untold new wealth to the Spanish and Portuguese, and actually provided the resources needed to at least hold the Turks at bay. However, when we look at this time period, we also see:

- Famine killing millions and then;
- The Great (Black) Plague kills somewhere between one third to half of the population, and also
- The Turks (and Islam) over run Southeastern Europe, and then
- The Church splitting in what was called the Reformation.

We also see a major shift away from the existing power structure of the “castes” system as the Church splinters with the schisms and multiple popes. The other castes try to exert power, resulting in the conflicts between nobles for control of both the land and the state; for example, the

- The 100 Years War
- War of the Roses

And the early efforts of the other castes (peasants and merchants) fighting for more power and share of the wealth:

The [heresy](#) of [Lollardy](#) rises in [England](#)

[Peasants' Revolt](#) in England

[1420-34](#): [Hussite Wars](#) in [Bohemia](#)

The peasants' wars in Germany

The Dutch wars against Spain

We see in the north and later in France that these peasant and merchant castes use the issues of religious reform as the rallying cry for their bigger share of the wealth. With the wealth of the Church up for grabs, in these new struggles, the military castes began, in

greater numbers, to side with the other castes (the Northern nobles supporting Reformation); and with their new religion, the Reformed Church as justification. Europe descended into war and chaos yet again (French Religious Wars and Thirty Years War, etc). And with the wars, millions died again.

In both the Catholic and the “Reformed” areas of control, the fear of the wrath of God was great, and both camps responded with increased efforts to “protect” the people from the Devil, and from the wrath of God. These security measures included both organized and spontaneous acts of terror.

Based on the theme of this book we can see that these policies of State sponsored tortures and killings were possibly in response to the utter sense of panic and fear created by the multitudinous famines, the plagues and invasions. Much of the anti-Jewish attacks early in this time period were directly related to the plague with the Jews being accused of poisoning the wells (and causing the deaths).

- A particular kind of massacre is that of scapegoats for major human disasters. The presence of Jews in Christian Europe has always provided an easy explanation for catastrophes like the plague. “Why are people getting sick and dying in mass? Because the Jews are poisoning the water.” Jews everywhere were thus attacked during the Black Death of 1347-1352 that killed around 25,000,000 Europeans. Jews were massacred wholesale. For example, in Mainz, Germany, 6,000 were recorded killed; in Erfurt 3,000 died. “By the end of the plague, few Jews were left in Germany or the Low Countries.” <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

Our minds today try to understand the concepts behind the internal and external conflicts that led to such destruction and to such events as the Thirty Years War. Actually as I write this book, we stand on the precipice of yet another massive world wide war based mainly on issues of demand for religious conformity, as one group or another perceives the demands of God.

In addition, in the 19th and 20th our last few generations have seen far worse in both terms of absolute numbers and in percent of the population killed in wars Centuries, (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_disasters_by_death_toll for the listing of 20th century deaths from wars and genocides.

However, what we need to understand, is that out of this period of war and chaos, and out of this period of the Church’s (both Orthodox and Reformed) on-going efforts at “protecting” the people by means of terror, grew the concepts that formed the foundations of the use of State terror to bring about conformity (for the good of the people) in our modern age. (This is not a new concept I am presenting here, see *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, for the foundation of this idea of how the efforts of Protestants’ to prepare the world for the “second coming” laid much of the foundation for Fascism.)

Out of this approach of the Churches and soon the states came a new form of “hell” that has come to be known as “democide” (please see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democide>) or as defined:

- “The murder of any person or people by a [government](#), including [genocide](#), [politicide](#), and [mass murder](#)”. For example, government-sponsored killings for political reasons

would be considered democide. Democide can also include deaths arising from “intentionally or knowingly reckless and depraved disregard for life.”

This definition is seen as an umbrella term to cover three other types of government actions against its own or other peoples:

- Genocide: among other things, the killing of people by a government because of their indelible group membership (race, ethnicity, religion, language).
- Politicide: the murder of any person or people by a government because of their politics or for political purposes.
- Mass Murder: the indiscriminate killing of any person or people by a government. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP2.HTM>

Examples of modern Democides include:

- [the Great Purges](#) carried out by [Joseph Stalin](#) in the [Soviet Union](#), the deaths from the [colonial](#) policy in the [Congo Free State](#), and [Mao's Great Leap Forward](#) resulting in a famine which killed millions of people. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democide>

<http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.TAB3.1.GIF>

The developer of this new concept of the organization of government activities, Professor J. R. Rummel claims that in the 20th Century (actually into the 1980's when he wrote):

- ... the death toll from democide is far greater than the death toll from war. After studying over 8,000 reports of government caused deaths, Rummel estimates that there have been 262 million victims of democide in the last century. According to his figures, six times as many people have died from the inflictions of people working for governments than have died in battle.
- Rummel also states that in the 20th century there were 15 *megamurderers*—those states killing in cold blood, aside from warfare, 1,000,000 or more men, women, and children. These fifteen megamurderers have wiped out over 151,000,000 people, almost four times the almost 38,500,000 battle-dead for all this century's international and civil wars up to 1987. The most “absolute Power” states, that is the communist U.S.S.R., China and preceding Mao guerrillas, Khmer Rouge Cambodia, Vietnam, and Yugoslavia, as well fascist Germany, account for near 128,000,000 of them, or 84 percent. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP1.HTM>

He then states that there were also Kilo-murders, (as opposed to the Mega-murders) or those states that have killed innocents by the tens or hundreds of thousands,

- China Warlords (1917-1949), Ataturk's Turkey (1919-1923), the United Kingdom (primarily due to the 1914-1919 food blockade of the Central Powers in and after World War I, and the 1940-45 indiscriminate bombing of German cities), Portugal (1926-1982), and Indonesia (1965-87). Some lesser kilo-murderers were communist Afghanistan, Angola, Albania, Rumania, and Ethiopia, as well as authoritarian Hungary, Burundi, Croatia (1941-44), Czechoslovakia (1945-46), Indonesia, Iraq, Russia, and Uganda. For its indiscriminate bombing of German and Japanese civilians,

the United States must also be added to this list.

These and other kilo-murderers add almost 15,000,000 people killed to the democide for this century.

And the concept of democide, while new, can now be applied to previous events in history. One of the more noted examples offered by this approach is the African Slave trade

- In the 16th to 19th centuries alone the death toll among African slaves being transported to the New World may have been over 1,500,000, possibly 2,000,000; millions more died in capture and in transit to the Orient or Middle East. And just among those kept in Africa some 4,000,000 may have died. Overall, in five centuries, Europeans, Arabs, Asians, and African slave traders, possibly murdered near 17,000,000 Africans; perhaps even over 65,000,000. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

But prior to the 20th century the “honor” for the mega death of people went to the Mongols who in less than 150 years of domination killed in unbelievable, but validated numbers:

- The Mongol khans and their successors and pretenders possibly slaughtered around 30,000,000 Persian, Arab, Hindu, Russian, Chinese, European, and other men, women, and children. As incredible as this huge estimate seems, that it gives some indication of the sheer human cost of Mongol conquest can be inferred just from Khubilai Khan’s rule over China. According to a Chinese writer, “in gaining and maintaining his throne he slaughtered more than 18,470,000 Chinese.” <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>
- Although not competing in numbers with those massacred in Asia and the Americas, Europeans had their share of such genocidal massacres. An illustrative case is the St. Bartholomew massacre. On August 24th, 1572, King Charles IX or his Court unleashed a slaughter of French Calvinists that spread from Paris to the whole country. In this famous St. Bartholomew day massacre a contemporary Protestant estimated that 300,000 were killed; later estimates reduced this to 100,000, then 36,000. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

So, clearly we can see that the idea of the state engaging in the wholesaling killing of people is not new per say to this time, nor is it linked exclusively to this period of 14-17 Century Europe. The issues and concepts of approach seem different from the Mongol invasions, although both were based in fear.

The Mongols were an invading force, conquering peoples with vastly greater numbers than themselves. The Mongols killed in great numbers for two reasons:

- To intimidate the next peoples in the line of march not to resist, and
- To eliminate the “surplus populations” that were too numerous to govern.

The Christians in Europe, amongst themselves, killed for fear that without conformity the wrath of God would return. (And yes there were political and economic issues as well, in the ability of the State to seize the wealth of the people accused.)

For example in Spain, the Catholic Monarchs, as they were labeled by the Popes, saw

themselves as leaders in the political fights on so many levels: against the “Moors” and the Turks, against the Heretics at home, in the new areas of the “Reformed Church” and in the newly discovered lands of the Americas.

The rulers of Spain saw that in her role as protector of European Christendom it was necessary to bring about complete religious conformity in all the lands she now governed (which by the 1600’s was extensive) This was needed to “please God.” To allow the “reformed Church” to succeed, in the mind of Spain, would surely bring on the wrath of God. Through the Church, Spain started the process of religious “cleansing” at home, and in all her colonies, and European possessions (including Holland and parts of Germany).

Some of the early efforts included extending the power of the Inquisition. Through this increase and other “organs of the State” the first efforts force converted or expelled the Jews and Muslims, and then later “kept an eye” on the converted to allow no slippage. This process of assuring maintenance of the “true faith” or, terrorizing the converts, became know as the “Auto de Fe” or “act of faith.” Hundreds of thousands of Jews and Muslims and converts were killed, or “cleansed” from their home land, all in the name of “state security,” or as it was then understood the need for religious uniformity.

This internal “cleansing” in Spain, as we have seen, was not new in Europe, Jews had been expelled in many countries, just as heretics and witches had been burned before. However, the scope of the attacks was far larger than seen before (if we rightly include the attacks on the Muslim, and former Muslim populations). Additionally, the use of torture on the converted was new, and extensive. Here was a European democide, based on no other cause but a fear of the consequences resulting from the lack of religious conformity.

- The Spanish Inquisition established in 1480 by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella and that was led from 1483 to 1498 by the Dominican monk de Torquemada may have burned to death as many as 10,220 heretics in total; 125,000 possibly died from torture and privation in prison. A secretary of the inquisition says that no more than 4,000 were burned to death altogether. But in Seville alone this number of heretics may have been so killed. Perhaps a more realistic figure is that of the General Secretary of the Inquisition, who estimated that from 1480 to 1488, 8,800 people were killed by fire, and from 1480 to 1808 the victims may have totaled 31,912. During the most intensive years of the Inquisition about 500 people per year also may have been burned to death in the New World (which could mean as many as 50,000 more persons).
<http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

However, the Protestants also used tactics of Democide, especially against women.

- The Catholic Church’s attempt to so purge heretics had its counterpart in the Reformation Protestant’s campaign against witches. Witches were believed to have sold their soul to the Devil for magical powers. While the Salem witch trials of Massachusetts in 1692 give the impression that early Americans were particularly prone to this superstition, it was really in Europe, particularly in Germany and France, that the torture and killing of alleged witches was most prevalent. Under Calvin’s government of Geneva in 1545, for example, thirty-four women were recorded burned or quartered for witchcraft. In the late years of the 16th Century, witch hunts reached their peak. In some German cities historians estimate that as many as 900 “witches” in a year were killed, often after agonizing torture to force out confessions; in some

villages, hardly a women was left alive. In total, throughout Christendom more than 30,000 “witches” may have (been) killed. Taking into account the routine nature of these killings, the final figure may be around 100,000; it might even reach 500,000. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

Therefore, using this concept of democide, the efforts of the Church look relatively normal in the stream of world cultural history. And put in context of world history, the attacks on non-believers or questionable converts may not match the “mega deaths” of the twentieth century.

However, with the primary question of this book being the search for the connections of this to the religions of Ba’al, we need to come back again to the question of tactics used in the repression.

And as noted:

- Whether of heretics or witches, this was a religiously induced and ritualistic form of government killing. Witches were presumably allied with Satan; heretics presumably had defied or defiled God. Sacrifice is another religion-based form of killing that is government practiced or approved.

<http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP3.HTM>

However, we still need to look at the basis for this fear, and the means that were used to dispatch the “agents of the devil.” After all this review, we might be able to hear the echoes, if not see the very face of Ba’al in these practices of the state and the Church to address the worst of their fears, the fear of God’s wrath.

Part V – The Morphing of Ideas –

Section II– The End Game, and a New Game

Subsection E – A Difficult Journey

Let's look at the roughly 2200 years of history that covers the time of the Judean Exile to Babylon and the Jewish expulsion from Spain and the following years of suppression of the Conversos and the Mariscos. Through all those centuries we see that society moved from:

- Religious diversity to religious intolerance,
- Acceptance of multiple efforts to reach the “divine” to the concept that only one group holds the absolute truth, and
- The transformation of the West from a polytheistic form of religion to one which promotes the concept of a single god (and along that line from democracy to absolutism).

We see a horrible pattern that begins, in some ways, with the Jews as the aggressors and one of the first groups to demand religious conformity within their areas of control (The Greeks under the Seleucid dynasties in Asia being the first (the very power that Jews revolted against)). This pattern includes:

- The dominant power's use of capital punishment for the breaking of the laws of conformity, and
- The dominant power's blaming all the cultural failures on the inability of all members of the group to maintain their conformity,

In many ways we can see that demand for religious conformity, and the use of the powers of “the church” and or “the state” to enforce this conformity is perhaps the root of such civic madness that is seen in our society over history. This demand apparently continues today.

This statement is not intended to say that religious intolerance was not seen before the Jewish efforts at forced conversions, and maintenance of cultural conformity under the Hasimodian rulers. There are countless examples of people being persecuted in Greek culture for disrespecting the gods, and for presenting a world view different than those held by the culture and the state. The trial and execution of Socrates is perhaps the most noted from the “Classical Age.”

However, if we reflect on what we have seen in this work, we find that over this time period of 2200 years, there is a continuing pattern in which the push for religious conformity has not only greatly stifled societies, but has also led to some of the most horrible “crimes” of the millenniums.

Too much of this work has already focused on those gruesome events, but here's brief review of the sequence (and again, some of these are hard to prove, as are the numbers):

- Moses ordering the killing of the worshipers of the Golden Calf (some 3000 slain). If the Bible is correct, hundreds of thousands more are killed as the Hebrew forces take

over Canaan.

- Isaiah ordering the killing of the Ba'al priests (some 7,000 slain).
- The Jewish revolts against Romans and Greeks (from 140 BC through 140 AD) resulting in the deaths of millions of Jews, as well as perhaps another million non-Jews.
- The deaths of Christians at the hands of the Roman state (3000-6000 at the most).
- The death of Pagans and Jews at the Christianized Roman State perhaps as high as 500,000 dead.
- The attacks on the Jews in Europe at the beginning of the Crusades (10,000s of thousand killed (perhaps 100,000 or more).
- The Crusaders' rampages in Holy Land, Byzantine Empire, Sicily, Southern France, Northern Europe (Teutonic Knights etc) and in Spain and Portugal. Millions killed, millions more forced converted or expelled.

This list is only a few of the events running out of Western Europe, prior to the discovery of the Americas and the water routes to Asia; the list would continue in many directions after that point, including the efforts at forced conversion of the Amerindian populations, and the efforts at the destruction of native religions all over the globe. However, in keeping it focused on the West, we next see in our list:

- The religious wars with the Protestant revolutions, where millions died.

There are other events that we cannot touch upon such as the Carlist Wars (1833-1878) in Spain http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlist_Wars in which one side promoted themselves as the part of,

- "God, Country, and King" and fought for the cause of Spanish tradition ([Legitimism](#) and [Catholicism](#)) against the [liberalism](#), and later the [republicanism](#), of the Spanish governments of the day.

We can also see the efforts at cultural and religious conformity in such famous events as the Armenian deaths while debate on the use of the term holocaust continues.

- The forcible deportation and massacring of hundreds of thousands to over 1.5 million [Armenians](#) (took place) during the government of the [Young Turks](#) from [1915](#) to [1917](#) in the [Ottoman Empire](#).
- It is widely acknowledged to have been one of the first modern, systematic [genocides](#), as many Western sources point to the sheer scale of the [death toll](#) as evidence for a systematic, organized plan to eliminate the Armenians.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_holocaust

The Balkan wars of the 1990's and the ongoing sectarian conflict in Iraq can be seen as modern continuations of the use of terror to enforce conformity by the State. Ethnic and religious "cleansing" was a term created in modern times to explain the systematic efforts by the state and ruling religious orders to bring about conformity.

The term “ethnic cleansing” has been variously defined... one of these includes the definition of Andrew Bell-Fialkoff:

[E]thnic cleansing [...] defies easy definition. At one end it is virtually indistinguishable from forced emigration and population exchange while at the other it merges with deportation and genocide. At the most general level, however, ethnic cleansing can be understood as the expulsion of an “undesirable” population from a given territory due to religious or ethnic discrimination, political, strategic or ideological considerations, or a combination of these http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_cleansing

Therefore the efforts of the Hebrews in Canaan, as represented in the Bible, in modern terms can be seen as an early effort at the ethnic cleansing of the Phoenician/Canaanites. The ensuing series conflicts first by the Hellenization process of the Greeks, and later by the small effort of the Jews to resist Hellenization led to subsequent wars with Rome. This series of events precipitated the “One God, One Emperor” efforts of the Roman Empire and as we have discussed, all were in an effort to create a greater sense of unity in the face of increasing onslaughts of enemies. External threats lead to increased efforts by the State to create conformity.

Finally, we have seen the effort at “conformity” as a tool of the Western Church as it attempted to create stability in the face of chaos at the fall of the Roman Empire and the next several centuries. Conformity inspires a sense of duty in the war against the rival forces of Islam, and then is employed in a losing fight against the growing power of the military caste, along with the demands of the merchant and peasant castes.

So, in modern terms, much of the history we have reviewed to gain this better insight into Phoenician impacts on modern society is one of democide and ethnic cleansing, and forced religious conformity. And, although the main teachings of the Jews, Christians and Islam included sharp prohibitions against the concepts of human sacrifice to God, we have seen over the course of history an endless amount of human slaughter in the name of God and in the name of creating a society that is “just in the eyes of God.” Perhaps better stated, what was sought was a society that would not bring back the wrath of God. This is precisely the sort of human sacrifice that is seen as so terrible in the sections of the Bible dealing with the end stages of the Jewish Kingdoms.

This insight as to the horror of religious wars is not new and has been bemoaned by all forms of writers from almost the beginning of writing. What I am hoping to bring to this discussion and long term cultural mourning over these deaths, is the connection to much of this slaughter to the cultural ghosts associated with the old ritual of human (child) sacrifice, and the belief that such sacrifice was something needed by God.

On the face of it, I believe that if we really look closely as to what I have presented in these two books and what has really happened in the past, (as opposed to “Church dominated history”) we see the connection. We see that the most overt elements of the Church and state attacks on its own persons, this democide, has at its roots (in the West) the conflict between Yahweh and Ba’al, over the practice of child sacrifice ... as needed in time of crisis.

First let’s see the parallel nature of the events

In the time of Phoenicia

- the burning of children to Ba'al in time of national crisis, for the purpose of gaining the protection of God to either gain his protection from an event coming, or to regain his protection and make amends for past events.

In the Middle Ages

- The burning of heretics, Jews (both unconverted and "Converso") and witches to bring about the protection of God (by ridding the community of non-believers) or to protect the community from the forces of evil (Satan) by eliminating the proponents of evil.

Now what were the rituals associated with the events?

Time of public celebration

- The Ba'alist events were public and filled with wild celebrations.
- The Christian events were public (auto De Fe) and filled with wild celebrations.

Both the events in the Phoenician and Christian worlds focused on repentance of sins and prayer and sacrifice for God's intervention and blessings (the Mass was defined as a sacrifice).

The event (the child sacrifice and the burning of the heretic) focused on salvation of the community, though the burning to death of a person.

- In the Ba'alist event the person was considered an innocent, and an offering of something of great value.
- In the Christians' events the person was considered an offering of great value as well, but it was the sinner destroyed to appease God and destroy the forces of the Devil.

And in both events, the process of execution was relatively the same (burning).

It should also be noted that two of the three main areas in which these burnings took place in the greatest of numbers (Southern France and Eastern Spain) were where the Phoenician influence had been strongest in Ancient Europe. The other area, Southern Germany, is an area of strong Celtic traditions.

While the primary tool of sacrifice was the same, and the primary rituals also appear to be the same and the process of community celebration seemed the same, at root cause we can see a primary element of similarity, burnt human offering to appease God, and to gain God's blessing and support, and to show a great "love of God."

However, here we see a major difference, not so much in practice, but in possibly the intent of the Phoenicians versus the intent of the Christians.

- The Phoenicians' efforts were designed to gain God's blessings by offering the "first born" to God.
- The Christian efforts were to ward off the anger and destruction of God by killing of the non-believers amongst them, or by killing the agents of the devil amongst them.

The Phoenicians saw no evil attached to those killed, nor was there any evil attached to

others in the community as a result of the acts. The Phoenicians were practicing what appeared to be standard duties of peoples to offer the first born of all things and the first of all fruits as a form of “thanksgiving” to the gods for giving them the good things in life and in a hope that the offerings would continue those blessings.

Also, the Phoenicians added sacrifices in times of crisis, to protect the community and to win back the favor of the gods, and to protect them from evil.

The Christians’ killings (of Jews, pagans, heretics, and witches) were seen not as an effort of thanksgiving, but as a means to stave off God’s wrath. They were not offered as a means of thanks, but as a means of prevention, the prevention of the destruction as shown in the Bible of Israel, of Judah, and in history by the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth.

- All of these destructions were seen by the Church as a result of the failure of the people to keep the covenant with God and by living by God’s laws. Therefore, each new crisis (invasion, plague, climate change,) was seen as God’s wrath for failure to maintain conformity and by allowing peoples to live outside of the covenant.

So the Church could and did justify its response to each crisis with attacks on those outside of the covenant, as needed to keep the situation from getting worse. The Church was not always the instigator of the assaults. The official line of the Church at times was against the attacks on some groups, such as Jews. However, the mass uprisings of the peoples against the “non-believers” was often taken over and institutionalized by the Church. By doing so, the Church did limit the impact of the popular efforts and may have lessened the actual numbers killed (as in the Inquisition in Spain), but with the institutionalization, the events, the slaughter, the burnings and tortures were also legitimized by the Church.

We have seen that this need for conformity is closely associated with times of economic and political crises (plagues, invasions, environmental collapse). Each time there was a crisis, we heard the echoes of Ba’alism in the response to those crisis, with the killing of the non-conformist (their non-conformity designating them as a friend of the Devil). Our efforts to “get right with God” by ridding ourselves of those who we see as non-conforming was often greatest during these times of crisis; we see the great killing sprees in history as often based in the communal fear brought on by these crises (in response to the plagues, collapses of the state, etc.).

Since the rise of Christianity, with its interpretation of the Jewish Bible, and as a morphed form of Ba’alism, we see that each crisis seems to merit an increase in the demand for conformity. When they were powerful enough, the Church did not hesitate to ratchet up demands for routing out the non-conformist and, took what it deemed appropriate actions for the greater good. In practice, this often meant taking these non-conformists and “sacrificing them to God.” Eventually, the process became organized and ritualized as in the Spanish Inquisition. This “new “ institution most mirrored the Ba’alism of the region’s past.

First, we see this connection to the religion of Phoenicia in the accusations against the people (the blood libel, the witches’ sacrificing of children). We also see it in the fact that the accusation of those who were different were determined to be in league with the Devil, in some fashion, and the Devil was in fact that god of veneration, the god that the sacrifice went to; Ba’al, morphed into the Christian manifestation.

Lastly, we see in the type of punishment used by the Church on non-conformist, an act that seems similar in performance, (the burning of people) and actually in context too; the Ba'alists rituals of sacrifice were designed to "give unto God that which is God's (the first born) and the rituals of the Church were designed to give unto God what God wanted, the casting out and killing of those who do not honor God, but worship the Devil (Ba'al).

Again, through the long, distant past, and the endless destruction of writings, and the endless slaughter of peoples who saw the world (and the divine) differently than the existing order, and the endless efforts to erase or reshape the past, and the control of history itself by religious forces, what we hear is that echo of Phoenicia.

We can see how in the Christian view, the world has changed little; the main concern is God's wrath. The only way that can be prevented is to cast out the Devil, or those who worship him. To the Christians the world is still just a battle between Yahweh and Ba'al or between God and the Devil; not much has changed since the time of the writing of the Bible.

As I said in the introduction, with so little of the past available for consideration, I can not really prove much of what I project, but only ask for a reasonable consideration of the logic and the concepts offered.

Part VI – Multiple Endings

Section I - Spain and Aztecs – Similar Religions? – The “New World” Wars

The voyages of Columbus and the Portuguese can basically be seen as the beginning of the end of the Church’s dominance of thought in the West, (although some strongly argue that it was St. Thomas Aquinas and his ability to merge Greek thought into Christian theology as the beginning of the rebirth of thought). The success of the voyages (and later Magellan) showed that the image of the world held by the Church was not what was presented in the Bible. By proving one concept incorrect, the age of discovery opened the way to the challenging of many of the concepts of the Bible.

- The fourth development that marks the end of the European Middle Ages was the discovery and conquest of overseas territories. Columbus’ accidental discovery of the Americas in 1492 is often cited as the seminal event, but one gets a more accurate picture of the situation if one remembers that within a short period of time, dozens of explorers and adventurers set out to seek their fortunes across the oceans. New technologies, such as compasses, improved ways of rigging sails, telescopes, and more reliable calculations in astronomy, made it possible for European seafarers to cross much larger bodies of water than before. While Europeans became fully aware for the first time of how small their old world had been in comparison to the whole globe, they aggressively exported their own culture and thereby ensured that in time their ways would become the ways of the world.

The result of all these social and cultural changes was a widespread feeling of uncertainty among many Europeans. The old stable world of the Middle Ages was gone, and a new permanent order had not yet been established. Old truths had become increasingly doubtful, but new ones had not yet firmly taken hold of people’s minds. <http://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/Descartes.htm>

Europe had been overwhelmed by the discoveries ... not just the wealth but also by the number of peoples involved and the diversity, the size of the world and all new and better products (all kinds of new foods). So many questions arose out of these voyages, including who were these Indians? They are not mentioned in the Bible; where did they come from?

- The most logical answer developed by the Church (and to the future delight of the Mormons) was that the Indians were in fact the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. The Church went to great lengths to say that the Bible was correct, completely correct. And they, the Church could find the answer for anything in the Bible. (please see <http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Archive/TenLostTribes.asp>)

This struggle over who were the “natives” of this new world, and the very “nature” of the Indian (got the name wrong to begin with) was far more important to the people of the time than we can really imagine. Besides the need to keep the Bible from being found in error in any way, there were such basic questions as --- Where they really humans? Did they have souls?

It was a major point of concern, for if the Indian had souls, they needed to be saved; and if they had souls, what rights did they have as people, and if they had rights, the Indians could

not simply be slaughtered or enslaved.

This was no simple problem for the time, and it took a great deal of thinking and discussion to try to resolve these issues.

- With the realization that the Americas represented regions of the Earth with which the Europeans were not aware of earlier, there arose intense speculation over the question of whether the natives of these lands were true humans or not. Together with that went a debate over the (mis)treatment of these natives by the Conquistadores and colonists.
- A substantial party believed that these new found peoples were not truly human. This party speculated that since Christendom was not permitted by God to become aware of their existence and thus bring the [Gospel](#) to them until so late, it was only because they were not human or possessed no souls, so they could not attain salvation. After all, the [New Testament](#) says that the gospel has been preached to all nations; since the gospel had not been preached to the Native Americans, perhaps they didn't count.
- In addition, Christians understood humanity to be divided into three distinct races (Europeans, Asians, and Africans), one for each of the [sons of Noah](#). Native Americans did not fit among these divisions. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sublimis_Deus

The Spanish, who were there on the ground in the New World, for the most part had a different view of the Indians; in the Caribbean basin, the Spanish wanted to and did make slaves of the “natives.”

The debate also came back to an old issue. Why was God so angry with his people? If the Indians were human and had not heard the good news, some speculated that the many crises of the “old world” were caused by the fact that the Christians did not know about the “new world”, and now, by bringing the word of Christ to the New World, God's wrath would be abated.

The debate was officially ended by Paul III who declared that the New World people were full people and entitled to rights and protections and could be converted to Christianity. He went so far as to say that those saying otherwise were acting under control of the Devil (The devil seems to be everywhere).

- **Sublimus Dei** (also seen as **Sublimus Deus** and **Sublimis Deus**) is a [papal bull](#) promulgated by [Pope Paul III](#) on [May 29, 1537](#), which forbids the enslavement of the [indigenous peoples of the Americas](#) (called Indians of the West and the South) and all other people.
- The pope uses in the bull almost the same language as in his letter, *Veritas ipsa* to Cardinal [Juan de Tavera](#), Archbishop of [Toledo](#), sent less than a month earlier on [May 2, 1537](#). Paul III unequivocally declares the [indigenous peoples of the Americas](#) to be rational beings with souls, denouncing any idea to the contrary as directly inspired by the “enemy of the human race” ([satan](#)). He goes on to condemn their reduction to [slavery](#) in the strongest terms, declaring it null and void for as well as for any people known or that could be discovered in the future, entitles their right to liberty and property, and concludes with a call for their evangelization.

The Bull had only marginal impact as the new rulers of the lands exploited the Indians to the

point of near extinction and then replaced them with Black slaves from Africa.

- Also see articles about the fights against Indian enslavement and Bartolome de las Casas and the debates at Valladolid on the fate of the Indians.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartolom%C3%A9_de_las_Casas

While there were squabbles between the homeland and the colonists over the rights of the “Indians” and how or when they could or should be converted, the religious issues in the new world soon took a major turn. Cortez had found the first “high” civilization in the new world, the Aztecs. Apart from the overwhelming gold and silver found on the mainland of the Americas, the Spanish found something completely shocking to them. What Cortez and the other Spanish found in “Mexico,” was a land, that to a Christian, seemed to be a land in the complete control of Satan, a land whose religious processes were dominated by the very thing God has so hated; they found a land where not only sacrifice was continuing, but human sacrifice was of utmost importance.

And the structure of the religion and even the mission of the religion were similar in so many ways to the Catholic faith and structure

- The Aztecs, believed that, as a people, they had a divine mission to prevent the fifth destruction of the Earth (*much like the Catholic saw themselves as preserving the people from the wrath of God*). They believed the four previous destructions were caused by the death of the sun, and the way to prevent his new death was by sustaining the sun with human hearts and blood. (*Again, four previous events the ten lost tribes, Babylon, Jerusalem’s destruction by Rome and the end of Christian Rome by the barbarians*)
- Aztec religion heavily emphasized sacrifice and ascetic behavior as the necessary preconditions for approaching the supernatural. Priest were celibate, and were required to live simple, Spartan lives (*as did, at least in theory, the Catholic priest and monks*) They performed constant self-sacrifice in the form of bloodletting as penitence, by passing barbed cords through the tongue and ears. (*The Mass was seen as sacrifice, and also, many Catholics at that this time performed self flagellation as a sign of penitence*)
- The Aztec approach to contact the supernatural was through a complex calendar of great ceremonies, (*As the Catholics did with the saint’s days and feast days*) which were held at their temples and were performed by the priests that acted as intermediaries between the gods and the human beings (*as was the role of the Catholic priests*). In all ceremonies were offerings and sacrifices to gain the gods’ favor and theatrical dramas of myths by masked performers in the form of dances, songs and processions. (*The Mass was actually considered a ceremony of sacrifice by the Catholics*) Each god has his special ceremony, and they had many gods!, so the calendar was full... <http://www.religion-cults.com/Ancient/America/Hispano-American%20.htm>

But in this new world, the sacrifices were not symbolic, the blood was not symbolic and according to some (including Marvin Harris), the eating of the body was not symbolic. Here, with the Aztecs, the “sacrificing” needed to keep the world in order was the actual sacrificing of people, not the symbolic “mass” reconstructing the sacrifice of Christ.

To the Catholic conquistadors, the whole of the Aztec religions was a perversion of the true faith and the similarities to their true faith could only be inspired by the Devil himself. The Catholics were sure they had entered the domain of Satan on earth. The Spanish Catholics that saw this human killing could not believe that what they had fought against for so long, in Europe, was still functioning in all its bloodiness in the New World. (Not that the Catholics saw the burning of heretics as a form of mass sacrifice.)

It was as if the Ba'alist religion of the Old Testament had fled and found root in this distant land ... and because Ba'al had become Satan, the rituals of the Aztecs must have looked to the Catholics so much like the ritual in the Old Testaments, and were seen as the cause of the fall of Israel. It became the mission of the Spanish to fight it, root and branch. The Inquisition was soon a major force in the "New World."

The Spanish made every effort to destroy the religion of the Aztecs, and make the holy places of the Aztecs into Catholic shrines. With the Inquisition, the newly christened were made to stay in line, or face the process of the Auto de Fe.

- To the Church and to rulers of Spain, the newly won unity of Spain, along with the expelling or conversion of the Jews and Moors to appease God must have seemed like minor victories when they were confronted by the human sacrifice on the levels of the Aztecs. Perhaps they wondered if all of the failures of Europe, which were based in Gods wrath, were in fact caused by the on-going practices of the Aztecs.
- The Church had declared that the Indian people had souls, and now these people were part of the Spanish world. Therefore, the Spanish held a collective responsibility to eliminate the practices hated by God from all the Spanish lands. If they did not, again, they would face the wrath of God. As the Bible demanded, they did not allow for religious non-conformity among the people of the new world.

Since the religious conformity of Spain was seen as the element needed for safety and the avoidance of God's wrath, these new lands that were now part of the lands governed by the Kingdoms of Spain and Portugal also had be brought into religious alignment.

- To the Church, the key to the fight for survival of Christendom was not just gaining the New World's land and gold, but maintaining God's grace, or better stated, avoiding God's wrath.

In the eyes of the first Spanish to see the Aztecs, and later the English Puritans when they meet the "Indians" of New England, and so many others Europeans coming across the Atlantic, Satan, (Ba'al), was loose in the New World. For centuries, the efforts by many countries and religious groups (Catholic and Protestant) to save the Indians' souls from Satan and to expel the Devil from the Americas resulted in millions of new dead among the Native American populations. The death toll was in the millions among the Aztecs alone. The estimated rate of population fall in the first fifty years of contact with Europe is from about 25 million to one hundred million, perhaps the greatest "die off " in all of history. (Much of the die off was caused by disease, but much was also the result of enslavement, war, forced conversions and the punishment for not accepting Christianity or reverting to the old religion.)

This concept that all the Americas was governed by Satan (and that the Indians were indeed minions of Satan) continued to be played out throughout the whole history of the Americas.

The Christians of all kinds made it a main priority to “save the souls” of these peoples even if it meant physical, as well as cultural and spiritual, death for those whose “souls” were saved. In the minds of the Spanish and later, other peoples who conquered the Americas, “saving the soul” of the Indians was of great service to the “newly discovered peoples.”

The “gift” of Christian civilization was often accepted (as well as resisted), yet the Indians died in the millions anyway. The view of the Christians was that they had saved the souls and liberated the Indians from Satan, from God’s oldest rival, so the deaths were somewhat lessened by the salvation provided. The Christians saw their action as mandatory and worthwhile to the Indians; we have little in the reaction of the Native people

- Clearly more important to the saving of the individual souls of the Indians, was the necessity for Spain to protect itself from the wrath of God, by addressing and combating Satan, by killing millions to protect themselves from the wrath of God, the wrath of God that demanded not only religious conformity, but the end of the sacrificing of humans.

In the minds of the Spanish and the Pope, and the entire hierarchy of the Church, the Americas presented the same war that they had been fighting almost since the beginning of the Church, the war to protect Christianity, by fighting the devil, and by fighting the religious rituals associated with the Devil (or Ba’al) and ending all sacrifice, other than the Mass, and especially human sacrifice. The efforts to save the souls of the “heathen” continue till today, under the same guise.

- And in the eyes of those in this fight, the antagonists have not changed since the beginning of time. The chief enemy and rival of Yahweh continues to be Ba’al; and, whether through the work of the Phoenicians, or Ba’al himself, the religion of the Ancient World had seemed to have fled to the New World
- Also see <http://wwwuser.gwdg.de/~agruens/aztec/reignat.html>
- <http://www.hyperhistory.net/apwh/essays/comp/cw16catholicaztec31011208.htm> similar religions
- Some history on Aztecs and Catholics <http://www.sxws.com/charis/history-2.htm>
<http://www.rjames.com/toltec/borgia/index.htm>
- <http://pages.prodigy.com/GBonline/awaztec.html#European.Paper.Manuscripts>

This need for a new religious war, the need to fight the Devil in the “new world”, helped shape the concepts of both religious and cultural superiority that the Europeans brought with them, everywhere. This view of having to fight Satan, the Devil, in every culture that was not Christian, created the justification for the development of Colonialism and eventually the massive European racism that became the hallmark of the 19th and 20th centuries. This concept of the Christians, that it was only through absolute and total conformity of everyone to the Christian Religion, that the wrath of God can be appeased, leads to its evolution into the demand for the absolute need to conform to the “needs of the state.”

The manifestation of this concept, of absolute truth, and the need for everyone to conform to this absolute truth, can be seen as the base cause of many of the mega murders and dictatorial regimes created in the last century. It can be seen as the basis for Fascism,

Communism, Right Wing Christian politics in the US, Muslim extremism, racism, and on and on. The belief that salvation can only be reached through conformity brings back echoes from the long distant past of the prophets of Yahweh calling out to kill all those who followed Ba'al. It can be seen as the basis of the Hebrew/Israelites/Judean/Jewish in their unsuccessful culture wars with the Phoenicians. Later, the morphed opponents of the Hebrew/Israelites/Judean/Jewish, the Christians, adopted the absolutism of the Hebrew/Israelites/Judean/Jewish and, with the power of the state, established the state terrorist tools for the enforcement of absolutism and "absolute truth."

The new conflict, of the early 21st Century, between the West, dominated by the "Christian" US, and the Middle East (dominated by absolutist Muslim concepts) again appear to be nothing new; two cultures with "absolutist views" seeing that they must do what they do to avoid the "wrath of God"; with wars and politics based in "religious justifications." In such a situation understanding the disregard for human life that has evolved out of these absolutist religious concepts, (the mass murdering from the time of the anti-Pagan riots of the Christians to the killing throughout Africa during the last decades, and all the democides in between) is just a repeat of the West's impact on the Americas. The willingness to accept mass murder as a justifiable means to appease God seems to continue. Perhaps the only thing left to say is, "May God help us all."

Part VI – Multiple Endings

Section II - From the Auto De Fe to the Ovens in Germany- The Same Justification.

The tone set by the rise of Christianity and the development of the concepts of an absolute religion based in absolute truth has had tremendous rippling effects throughout history. It dominated the history of the West, through the age of exploration, and colonialism. Through the Cold War and into the age of modern imperialism, the concept of absolute right and a “superior religion” has spread throughout the world.

This is not to say that Islam did not “suffer” from this absolutist complex, but their approach in general, in the past, was far different, in that they primarily let individuals come to Allah, mainly through the use of political and economic incentives. Until recently, throughout the Islamic world, minority religions were for the most part, tolerated (as shown by the Coptic Christians in Egypt and the Jews throughout the Muslim world prior to 1947 with the founding of modern Israel). Individuals of minority religions were often allowed to climb to high political positions in Muslim states (as in Spain and in the Ottoman Empire). Moreover, until the 20th Century, within Islamic controlled areas non-Muslims were not, for the most part, faced with forced conversion and horrible persecutions. We saw that, during the initial stages in the development of the Islamic Empire, the Arabs were often welcomed as liberators by the Christians who were being persecuted by other Christians. The current shape of the Balkans is also witness to this relative religious tolerance of Islam, where after some 500 years of Ottoman rule, the significant majority of the population of the area continued to be Christian. This is in marked contrast to Spain, where once the Catholics regained the lands, persecutions and expulsions (if not outright slaughters) of non-Catholics began.

- Jews typically had a better status in the Muslim world than in [Christendom](#), where at many times they were welcomed and provided [safe haven](#) during times of persecution of Jews by Christians. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews#Persecution>

But this tolerance of Islam was not the model used with the spreading of the empires of the Christian world. We have already seen that with the Crusades against all “pagan” areas (Middle East, Sicily, Spain, Northeastern Europe) there were always mass slaughters of the “non-believers” and forced exiles for the survivors. Even those who “accepted the true faith” were never free from potential and real terror as the Catholic Church used the inquisition against Conversos and Moriscos for generations after they had adopted the “true faith.”

This imperative towards religious absolutism changed as the European powers took over lands with populations that were many times larger than themselves. So while there were some efforts to convert the peoples of the East (India, China, Indonesia, Indochina, and of the Russians, Central Asia) the real focus shifted from efforts to convert, to the use of Christianity and the “absolute truth” it claimed, as a means of establishing a sense of “absolute superiority” over the “pagan” peoples. With this sense of superiority (based in understanding the true religion) came the sense of the absolute “right” to conquer and to rule all other peoples.

The “absolute superiority” concept was presented in intellectual terms, and formed the basis for much of modern racism. The argument went;

- We presented them with the truth (Christianity) and these people can not seem to

grasp the truth of it.

- Therefore, they are clearly inferior to us in intellect.
- Therefore, all persons other than us (Christians) must be inferior.
- Therefore, we must bring civilization to these inferior peoples, by force or other wise.
- And therefore, if they are inferior to us, we can dominate them as we must for our own benefit (Social Darwinism).

And of course there was the need to make everyone conform, to keep away God's wrath.

The concept that the "West" was bringing civilization and the "truth" to the East became a new accepted dogma of the new "religion" of imperialism (or White Man's Burden) as put by Rudyard Kipling:

Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_man's_burden

Of course, there were some who rejected this notion of superiority, and argued against it,

- Thus the African is really helpless against the material gods of the white man, as embodied in the trinity of imperialism, capitalistic exploitation, and militarism....
- To reduce all the varied and picturesque and stimulating episodes in savage life to a dull routine of endless toil for un-comprehended ends, to dislocate social ties and disrupt social institutions; to stifle nascent desires and crush mental development; to graft upon primitive passions the annihilating evils of scientific slavery, and the bestial imaginings of civilized man, unrestrained by convention or law; in fine, to kill the soul in a people-this is a crime which transcends physical murder. E. D. Morel, *The Black Man's Burden* <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1903blackburden.html>

But over the 300 year period of almost total dominance of the West, as stated the new trinity of "imperialism, capitalistic exploitation, and militarism" was promoted under the guise of religious and cultural superiority supported by the concepts of racism and an adoption of a concept much hated in the religious circles, that of evolution and Darwinism to support the concepts of Western superiority; the term "Social Darwinism" was used to support the concept of Western superiority and justify Western wars against other peoples of the world (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Darwinism)

While Darwin himself showed little support for the ideas of "social Darwinism" his name became stuck to the concepts, and the concepts, as we know, became a major foundation for modern racism and fascism.

- Although a simple racial view of social Darwinism was that the white nations had to

civilize the savage colored nations of the world, there were other more complicated ones. Darwin's theories of evolution were used to distinguish differences between the races of man based on genetic branching and natural selection. Genetic branching is the process that occurs in all species, including humans, in which groups of a species become separated from one another, each developing their own genetic characteristics different from other groups. It is because of genetic branching that we today have the human races or human populations.

- Popular at the time was the idea that the Nordic race of [Northern Europe](#) was superior because it evolved in a cold climate, forcing it to develop advanced survival skills that it later applied in modern times by being expansionist and adventurous. Natural selection was also thought to have worked at a faster pace in the frigid north, eliminating the weak and unintelligent more thoroughly than it did in warm climates such as Africa. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Darwinism

Although, as the proponents of the theory claimed:

- It was the White race that deserved to survive from the viewpoint of "survival of the fittest."

They also saw that it was not an absolute:

- But in the modern world, the White race was falling victim to inner politics while the yellow and brown hordes of Asia were building up their strength in preparation to overthrow the White man's domination of the globe. Many believed that it was only a matter of time before the White race and its Western culture were supplanted by "inferior" races and cultures.

This interpretation of a theory, this Social Darwinism, became a backbone of Germany. The fear of losing out to the inferior races became a major organizing tool of the regime. Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, etc ... all the inferior races had to be stopped and destroyed to preserve the true and pure race of the Aryans. (Just like all heretics, Pagans and Jews had to be destroyed to keep away God's wrath and preserve the "true religion.")

The s and others modern absolutists, were just the most recent and most documented of those who used the concepts of racism and superiority. They were hardly the first possessors of absolute truth to justify actions against "inferiors."

We can see it in the lists of actions that we "modern peoples" now see as atrocities, but the peoples (or at least most of the ruling peoples) of the time saw as normal and justified. The list below only touches the matter (and some have been mentioned in this work earlier):

- The Religious Wars of the 16-17th Centuries (30 million dead)
- The Modern Slave trade (at least 30 million dead in the during the transit alone) and modern slavery (not officially ended in the Americas until Brazil ended slavery in 1888) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_slavery
- 17th Century Slavic pogroms on Jews (several 100.000's die - see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khmelnysky_Uprising) and during the Russian Revolution 250,000 plus killed <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pogroms>

- Colonial exploitations (Deaths of 10's of millions, most noted in Congo Free State, Indochina and Indonesia)

The treatment and the deaths of these people were often justified in that they were inferior people, their gods inferior (or false), and it is "just" that the superior exploit the inferior (Social Darwinism).

However, for the most part, the ideals of racism included in its ideology that the superiors were protecting themselves from the inferiors (For example, segregation was need to avoid the "mongrelization of the race" as a term used in general terms in the United States by racist up until the 1970's and continues to be used in modern racist groups today (see http://www.stormfront.org/truth_at_last/books/A-Study-in-Racial.htm)

The killing, political exclusion, and economic repression of minorities was justified to protect the pure and "good" race. Just as the killing in Spain by the Inquisition was justified to protect the true faith and the killing of the Ba'alists in Judea was justified to protect the people from the false gods.

While we saw how the Inquisition found justification for burning of "heretics" in the Bible, the modern Christian absolutists found justification for racism in the Bible.

- The civil rights movement was unacceptable to southern fundamentalists for several reasons. First, it promoted a form of racial "mingling" which undermined the God ordained separation of the races and increased the possibility for racial intermarriage, a clear violation of biblical teaching
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0NXG/is_1_34/ai_94160906/pg_2

We are presented with a history today in which the s are considered as almost an aberration, rather than as a predictable manifestation of the absolutist concepts promoted by Christianity for centuries. Much of what the Nazis said about minorities (substitutes for heretics and non-believers) and Jews was not really new. Even the concept of a "final solution" of the "Jewish Question" was not original (please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Jewish_Question) Russia had, 70 years before Hitler, had their own intentions of becoming "Jew Free," and created the "1/3, 1/3, 1/3 solution."

- The [Chief Procurator](#) of the [Holy Synod](#) and the tsar's mentor, friend, and adviser [Konstantin Pobedonostsev](#) was reported as saying that one-third of Russia's Jews was expected to emigrate, one-third to accept baptism, and one-third to starve
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Russia_and_the_Soviet_Union)

The s added, or perhaps more appropriately stated, reintroduced, a concept into the modern world's mass murders, that again, justifies killings in defense against the Devil (Ba'al), thereby preserving the true believers from the wrath of God. Like the Christian absolutists, their mass killings were justified for the "preservation" of the pure people.

- The logic went that the pure people were under attack from the non-pure, the alien, and all of society was in danger from the presence of the non-pure.
- Therefore, it was necessary to expunge the non-pure from society, and then from existence (all in the name of community salvation and protection).

The logic was the same as the Catholic Church, and other Christian Churches, and the Jews of the Returnees of the Exiles; all believed that God's wrath would come upon the whole community for allowing the presence of the non-believer, and the worshiper of Satan, the Devil, or Ba'al.

Conversion was not an option in the Nazi "take" on the need for conformity, since the inferiority was in the blood and nature of the "being" (the take on Social Darwinism). The inferior people simply had to be eliminated (for the protection of the Society – from the wrath of God?)

Therefore, Nazi logic went - to protect the innocent and pure from the the corruption of the impure, the inferior needed to be eliminated. While the Nazis saw themselves as the new religion, and were intending to eliminate Christianity, they needed to use the imagery of Christianity as a transitional tool to that aim (see *From Heaven to Hell: Christianity in the Third Reich and Christian Imagery in Propaganda*

Margaret Claire Kelty, BA (Awarded in 2004) <http://dissertations.bc.edu/ashonors/200423/>

- The German government during the Third Reich was a totalitarian regime, but there was one matter in which the Nazi Party did not have carte blanche, religion, which made it an intrinsic threat to the authority of the State. Many Nazi officials saw Christianity as the inherent and irreconcilable enemy of National Socialism, but they knew they risked losing the support of the German people if they instantly dissolved the Christian Churches. Instead of vehemently attacking the Christian confessions the way they did in Poland, in Germany the National Socialists set up a mirage of support for and acceptance of religious institutions, all while working to undermine the Christian tradition that they considered of greatest detriment and danger to their State.

Kelty points out that the Nazi's even showed Hitler replacing Christ as the intermediary with God :

- In an April 19, 1936 broadcast, Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, told the German people, "We have a feeling that Germany has been transformed into a great house of God, including all classes, professions and creeds, where the Fuehrer as our mediator stood before the throne of the Almighty." (see page 72)

And in this role we see Hitler portrayed as fighting the modern day face of the Devil, the Jewish Communist, leading the superiors against inferiors in the final battle to save the German people. (He also later tried to attack the existing church by claiming that the Church was protecting Jews.)

- Hitler regularly complained about Christian interference with his plan (saying one time that the Pope was blackmailing him). Nazis propaganda often showed Jews invoking Christian imagery or hiding behind church symbols for protection.
<http://www.catholicleague.org/pius.php?id=9>

The story of the holocaust is well known and the details can not be given here (Please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust) However, it should be made clear that the event was not an apparition, as it is often portrayed in modern culture. The Nazi attack upon the Jews had all the traditional hallmarks of the other assaults in Western European History, including:

- Banning Jews from professions, and society in general
- Requiring the wearing of special clothing
- Limiting where they can live
- Confiscation of wealth
- Expulsion
- Prior to the war, Hitler had long claimed he was willing to let all Jews in leave Germany, but no other country would accept them.
- And mass killings

When millions of new Jews (Polish, Russian, Balkan and Western European Jews) were added to the Nazi state, the Final Solution was decided upon; and in the process we know that the Nazi's instituted means of mass murder that combined the efficiency of the new technological and scientific age, with the deep rooted hatred of the "heretic" and non-conformists so long promoted in the Christian world. While initially the Germans used guns, larger Jewish populations made it clear to them that a better means were needed for killing.

- The s never seemed to deliberately use the process of burning the living, only the dead (as opposed to the standard process of burning of the living, found in much of Church history).

The democide committed by the s in these death camps, against a wide range of peoples, resulted in some 11 millions killed (or almost twice the number of "6 million Jews) in this new, mostly mechanized, approach to killing of "the unclean."

- Taking into account all the victims of persecution, the death toll rises considerably: estimates generally place the total number of victims at nine to 11 million
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust

With this "process" we see the mass murder of people, not as directly related to State and Church conflicts over religion per say, since the s were basically against all religions; the Jews were destroyed by the s not so much for their religion (as in the past) but for their "inferiority as a people." The Nazi view of the Jewish threat was more along the racial mixing and the economic controls that prevented the pure and good Germans from advancing to their rightful place in the world (absolute control).

Therefore, a connection to Ba'al in this Nazi insanity of murder seems remote, other than as a projection of the West's history of mass killings in order to provide "protection" from non-conformity. In this light, the Nazi connection to Ba'al seems to be there, and is actually made manifest by the view of the Christian world, if not the Nazi world view.

- For the term to describe these mass murders, the Christian writers (not initially the Jewish writers) looked at how the s disposed of the dead, and their use of the ovens. They focused not on how the s killed the people, but only how they disposed of the dead, in the death camps. The Christian writers chose the term "holocaust" based on these ovens.

We must understand that the term “Holocaust” was developed by Western Christian writers, while the Jews (who do use the term now) initially chose a quite different term to describe the horrors of democide.

The Jewish term to describe the events of Hitler was initially, “Shoah.” It’s still the preferred term.

- The biblical word **Shoa** (שואה) (also spelled **Shoah** and **Sho’ah**), meaning “calamity,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust

Holocaust by the origin literal intention of the word means:

- **The Holocaust** (from the Greek *holókauston* from *holos* “completely” and *kaustos* “burnt”), and has been associated “with sacrificial offering to a god”. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust
- Shoah became the standard [Jewish] term for the Holocaust as early as the 1940s. *Shoa* is preferred by many Jews for a number of reasons, including the [theologically](#) offensive nature of the original meaning of “holocaust” i.e a sacrifice to God. In addition, the holocaust term is problematic since the term refers to a sacrifice Jews were required to make by the [Torah](#). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_the_Holocaust
- Some of the [Jewish sacrifices](#) specified by the [Torah](#), the [olah](#) was completely burnt. These, [whole offerings](#), were referred to in [Hebrew](#) as *olah*, a term translated as *holókauston* in the [Septuagint](#). Today, some English [Bible translations](#) render the word as *holocaust*, and others translate it as *burnt offering*. For example, [Exodus](#) 18:12a is translated in the [New American Bible](#) as *Then Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, brought a holocaust and other sacrifices to God*, while it is translated in the [New International Version](#) as *Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_%28sacrifice%29

Therefore, the use of the term “holocaust” in relationship to the events of the s has, to many Jews, some kind of inference that the deaths were in some way justified and in some way based in a ritual requirement on the part of the Jews, to be killed. The use of the term, to many, implies that the Jewish deaths were somehow required, needed, and a high ritual, and was part of God’s requirements.

The Nazis did not use the term of holocaust, they called the killings the “final solution.” The initial Jewish works on the Nazi killings used the “standard terms” for other attacks on Jews (pogroms) such as disaster (Shoah) and also Churban (meaning “destruction”)

- **Churban Europa**, meaning “European Destruction” in Hebrew (as opposed to simply **Churban**, the destruction of the [Second Temple](#)), is also used. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Names_of_the_Holocaust

But in the West, mainly among the Christian West, the term, “Holocaust” became the accepted term, not only for the deaths under Hitler, but for many other events that happened prior to the s and afterwards.

- The term became increasingly widespread as a synonym for “[genocide](#)” in the last

decades of the [20th century](#) to refer to mass murders in the form “X holocaust” (e.g. “Rwandan holocaust”). Examples are [Rwanda](#), the [Ukraine](#) under [Stalin](#), and the actions of the [Khmer Rouge](#) in [Cambodia](#).

- In order to suggest comparison with murders other historical events have also been labeled “Holocausts”, for example the oppression of lower caste groups in India (“[Sudra Holocaust](#)”) or the slave trade (“[African Holocaust](#)”)

But the underpinning of the term, the very meaning of the term is that of a burnt sacrifice to God, and by its use with the Jews, it implies that the Jews were burnt, as a sacrifice to God. No Jews (or at least few Jews) were burnt alive by the Nazis, as opposed to the hundreds of thousands who were killed in fires (at the stake) by Christians throughout the centuries. In the death camps, persons were burnt only after death, from some factor, such as gas chambers, shootings or over work and starvation.

Perhaps the use of the term in the Christian West continues to point out what Christians see as the irony of the event of the extermination of the Jews of Europe.

- The Christians see that, in the Bible, it was the Jews who were destroyed by God for burning their children, and sent into Exile into the unknown (ten lost tribes) or into Babylon (Judea), because they would not end the practice of “passing through the fire,” the worshiping of Ba’al through the burning of their children.

In associating the term “Holocaust” to the murder of the Jews by Hitler, - the Christian West brings up once again the concept of the “blood libel” - that Jews needed to kill a child for its blood as a sacrifice to God - or that the “Hebrews” secretly continued their ancient rituals that were warned against in “*Hebrews*” and in the Prophets.

The word “olah” is a specific sacrifice, the one that is not to be eaten, to be burned completely, and the meat of which is not shared among the community. It is completely consumed for the benefit of God alone (or the flesh of the child sacrificed by worshipers the Ba’al and Hebrew).

- **whole offering** ([Hebrew: olah](#)), also referred to as **burnt offering**, is a type of [Biblical sacrifice](#), specifically an [animal sacrifice](#) in which the entire sacrifice is completely burnt, consumed totally by [fire](#). The term *burnt offering* derives from the [Septuagint](#) translation, itself deriving from the Biblical phrase *an offering made by fire*, which occurs in the description of the offering. This form of sacrifice, in which no meat was leftover for anyone, was seen as the greatest form of sacrificand was the form of sacrifice permitted by [Judaism](#) to be given at the Temple by non-[Jews](#).
- [Biblical scholars](#) regard the [Moloch](#) offering, which involved human immolation, as being related to the *whole offering*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whole_offering

The olah is considered the highest form of sacrifice, and with the term Moloch, we come full circle again to Ba’al, to the human sacrifice for Ba’al, the ultimate sacrifice to appease God.

Even in the Christians West’s denouncing of the insanity of the super pogrom of Hitler, they somehow managed to come up with a term that harkens back to the age old hatred of the Jews, and the continuing conflict between the Christians and Jews over the idea of human sacrifice. As such, it perpetuates the mistaken association of the Jews of the post exile to the

pre-exile Hebrews and their use of human sacrifice. The use of the term “Holocaust” actually comes back to the very term associated with the worship of Ba’al (or as we seen, the modern concept of the worship of the Devil.)

Just as the early Christians mistranslated Greek to meet their needs and presented the world with a Christ born of a virgin (when that was not implied in early Jewish and Greek writings of Mary) the Christians managed to mistranslate the Hebrew “Shoa” to again refer to the blood libel concept that there is a relationship between Jews and human sacrifice. Since the Christians base their religion on the concept that their God (or at least one part of their God) was a human sacrifice, perhaps this was intended in some way as a compliment. But to the Jews, this use of “Holocaust” seems to imply a far different meaning.

However, the Christians had also come to a similar conclusion to the Jews of the Exile, that the rituals of Phoenicia were the most hated by God, and that the God of the Phoenicians (Ba’al) was God’s chief rival, therefore the Devil, and the ultimate evil. So perhaps we can look at the use of the term “Holocaust” by the Christian West, in a less negative term. Perhaps we can see that the Christian West was saying that the actions of the Nazis, this “human sacrifice” was in fact like the actions of the Devil and hence, evil incarnate.

In either case, if it was a vague reference to the Blood Libel, or perhaps saying that the mass killings were the work of the Devil. We can see in this study of state democide by the Germans, remnants of the traditions of Phoenicia and Ba’alism as manipulated and hidden by the Christian world.

- We still are seeing the Phoenicians and their religious rituals, used to describe the most evil of events, the Nazi democide, just as was stated by the Prophets of the Old Testament.

Through this connection, we can see the morphing of so many religions, that in the eyes of the Christian West, the world is much the same as it was 3000 years ago, where Yahweh and Ba’al are still the two major Gods in struggle for the hearts of the people, and how and what we “sacrifice” to these gods, and how we sacrifice to the God, is the key to obtaining safety and peace in this world.

We also see with the use of the term “Holocaust” a means of avoidance, almost a means of ignoring what was done, and like all the mass murders of the past and present, they can all be written off in some fashion as connected to God, and the needs of God, and again, as Maccoby stated, the horrible deed is done, and no one is responsible, no one is guilty.

Part IV – Multiple Endings

Section III - A Rightful Place for a “righteous” people.

We have traveled through some 12,000 plus years of history in this little effort, and have seen the rise of religion and the shifting from the mother goddess to the Great Sky God; a shifting from the concepts of willingness to accept the views of others, to the total intolerance of the other’s conception of the divine. We have seen the journey taken by people from religions that focused on “sacrifice” of living beings, both animals and humans, to keep the world in balance, and to appease the gods, and, also to solidify contracts. We have also seen religions that rely only on the sacrifice of products (foods) and denounced human sacrifice, and then religions that mimic the acts of sacrifice and denounce those who carry them out in the “real deal.”

We have also witnessed how one religion, the Jews, fought against repression and forced conversions against the greatest empires (Greek and Roman) and lost. Judaism was almost obliterated, but survived, somehow. We also saw how a branch of that religion (or maybe not), refused to fight against religious conformity, was initially persecuted for not offering sacrifices, and then once in power ordered the killing of those who would offer sacrifices, ironically becoming an enforcer of religious conformity.

We have also seen how religion became the tool of power rather than a source of comfort. The mandates of religious and state powers for conformity moved religion from a tool for inquiry in to the nature of the universe, and the meaning of life and existence, (and past existence), to a tool of repression of thought, and above all, a reason to kill millions.

- We have also seen that absolutist religions created the need for belief in the superiority of the believer and the absolute inferiority of the non-believers; as powers used religion to justify almost all of what in modern terms are seen as evil ... racism, repression of thought, and slavery, genocide and democide.

Throughout this journey we have seen that despite it all, beliefs actually have changed very little. Most of the religion of the Ancients and Classical worlds are mainly included in the religions of the modern West.

If an ancient Egyptian were reincarnated today and walked into a modern Catholic church, perhaps 70% or more of what was going on would appear understandable and a variation of their ancient practices (from the Madonna and child to the cross, and preparation for the next world, as well as much of what is now called the Ten Commandments. (These commandments appear in almost the same sequence, but with a negative affirmation in the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*) written centuries prior to the Bible, and the supposed meeting between God and Moses.)

(in the second series, [of the Book] the deceased addresses each of 42 cryptically named gods, in turn, declaring his innocence:

O Wide-of-stride who comes from On: I have not done evil.

O Flame-grasper who comes from Kheraha: I have not robbed.

O Long-nosed who comes from Khmun: I have not coveted.

O Shadow-eater who comes from the cave: I have not stolen.

O Savage-faced who comes from Rosetjau: I have not killed people...

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_Book_of_the_Dead

What might not at first appear recognizable to this returned soul, would be at least familiar and, with some explaining, would fit into their concept of the divine and the afterlife (replacing Osiris with Jesus). What would be new would be the need to renounce not just bad acts, but to renounce Satan, or the Devil.

The message of the modern Christian would also be very understandable to an ancient Phoenician, if also brought back to life, and the message of the Church, (the son of god died for our sins, rose to heaven and sits with his father in judgment of people) would be very familiar. That the son of God was sacrificed for the good of the people in time of crisis, and to seal a new covenant with God as the witness and, God as the partner, would sound very familiar. The Phoenician would perhaps take some time to understand that the actual act, the actual required killing “was no longer needed, through Jesus,” but the morphed nature of the act, the Mass as the sacrifice, would no longer be kept hidden. The person would quickly see the essential element of the religion he/she and their ancestors had practiced for some 6,000 years.

So throughout all of this journey we come to the conclusion that religion does not really change, it morphs, that the characters (Gods, saints, etc) come and go, that the names change (to protect the innocent?) and each version of the same concepts have their moments of popularity, followed by periods of fading and then perhaps, revivals, under a new name, but the main story line of religion, in the West, remains the same.

- We need to appease the gods or God for help and success in this world and for a positive existence in the next world, and we obtain this help through (and here is one of the big changes that has occurred over time) either overt sacrifice and prayer, as was done in the “past” or with symbolic sacrifice (the Mass) and prayer, as is promoted in the Western religions of the present day.

If the big God is too busy maybe some of the lesser gods (or saints) will intervene for us and help us out. And, also, that:

- We must use God to oversee our current activities, through solemn oaths, or by gaining God’s agreements on bargains and treaties.

Without the threat of a power beyond human power, how can any oath or treaty be trusted?

- And lastly that the gods or God will protect and look after our beloved dead and that we will at some point be able to rejoin our parents, spouses, children and others in an existence far better than the ones in which so many die violent deaths through disease, war or outright democide, often at the hands of those who are supposed to protect us in this world.

Modern religions in the West are composites and retellings of these morphed events and

concepts. And while the contributions of the Greeks, Jews, Zoroastrians, and many others are better acknowledged today, the purpose of this book has been to ask for the acknowledgement of the contributions of the Phoenician peoples;

- That their religion collectively (and again, inaccurately) referred to in this book as Ba'alism, deserves much more consideration and respect as a major force, a major contributor of morphed ideas, around what we now see as good and evil. Our concept of both God and the son of God and also the chief rival of God, Ba'al, is greatly based in the religion of these almost forgotten people.

The goal of this book has been to help us understand that Ba'al is a major source of what we now see as both the Devil, and also the basis for salvation, in that God sacrificed his only begotten son, in time of crisis, as was the traditional concept of the religion of the Phoenicians for thousands of years prior to the rise of Christianity.

We need to eliminate the still existing modern discrimination that exists against the Phoenicians, and their Southern element, known as the Canaanites, fostered upon us by the writings of the Bible. By doing so, we can better understand the origins of our current beliefs and perhaps move further away from the madness imposed upon our culture by this concept of "absolutely correct" religions and the repression this creates in both thought and politics in a modern world.

So, as this book has sought to merge the politics of the times to the religious changes of the time, perhaps its best to end on a paraphrasing of a modern axiom; religion represses thought; absolutist religions repress thought absolutely.

Part VI - Multiple Endings –

Section IV A final word on the Devil ...

As we have stated, there is a two track possibility in the premise of this book;

Ba'alism evolved or morphed into Christianity, and

The Christians took Ba'al and made him the devil

On the face of it these ideas may seem contradictory. Yet it is also something that we see in culture from now and then; for example, the Romans killing and then deifying Caesar (the opposite of “the evil that men do lives after them) our love-hate cultural relationship with Napoleon, and how the Russian Communists denounced everything that was of the Czar and then imposed a harsher version of Czarist rule.

However, we can see some of the possible internal efforts to bring these two seemingly different concepts together in some of the writings of the New Testament (besides the concepts presented concerning the *Book of Hebrews*)

A case in point is how we see Mark, Mathew and Luke in which Jews accusing Jesus of being an agent of Ba'al

Mark3: 22

- The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

Again, we should note here that the Jews are using the Ba'alist term as a designation of evil, and that Jesus is representing Ba'al (which may be very true). What is very interesting for the concepts of this book is the way Jesus answers ...

Remember, it appears that the *Book of Hebrews* was written to address the needs of the descendants of “non-exile” Jews, and they still held Ba'al in great esteem, (at least covertly) and the answer of Jesus seems to show some of that esteem for Ba'al

Mark 3:

- 23So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? 24If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

The standard interpretation of this statement is Jesus saying that if Jesus does good, he must be good and not an agent of Satan.

However, Jesus does not state that he is not an agent of Beelzebul (or Ba'al), as he is accused, but clearly leaves the door open for another interpretation. Jesus could be saying, that if he is doing things that are good, and he is an agent of Satan (or Ba'al), then how can Satan (or Ba'al) be bad? Jesus could be interpreted as saying, that if he is an agent of Ba'al, and he does good; then Ba'al must be good.

- Remember Jesus is talking to the agents of the power (the Jewish State) that had only

recently forced converted the Jews of the Galilee to the “Orthodox” form of Judaism, a form not supported by the “non-exile” descendants who lived in the area.

So, his answer to the “oppressor Pharisees” can be seen as a declaration intended not for the hearers (the Pharisees) but for the audience, the people around him in Galilee, and that message could be that Ba’al is not evil or not the Evil One (Satan), but is good, because if Jesus is an agent of Ba’al and he does good, Ba’al can’t be bad, since Jesus is doing good things.

- The house divided could be a reference to forced conversion and the repression of the peoples’ concepts of a “good” Ba’al.

But this meaning would not have been grasped by those from areas out side of this area of Judea, or those who are of a different time and “world view.” Perhaps they can only be understood in the time frame intended as a message to those subjected to forced conversions and the controversies created by the “new Jews,” the returnees.

Nor is it likely that any of us in the modern age, in general, can really understand the references and meanings of people in the past (never mind the intentions of Jesus). We may eventually get a bit better at translations, we may even better recognize the difference in culture and to view their culture with a non-biased view of the future; we may even be able to be more accepting of the fact that our concepts of the past are mostly based on religion and not fact.

Yet we will never really understand the parables of Jesus or the fears of the Jewish prophets or the declarations of the judges of old, not only because the translations are not great, or the understanding of the means and intent is always clouded, or that we have very different life experiences than the people living then and there, but also, deep in our current understanding of the world,

- We still want to hold on to the Christian concept of absolutism, and the belief that there is a God and there is a Devil, and that they are in constant conflict. And that we as individuals have a path to salvation.

It helps many of us deal with the same problems that humans have been asking since at least the “Great Leap Forward” some 50,000 years ago;

- What happens to me and my love ones after this time?
- Why do bad things happen to good people? and
- Why do good things happen to bad people?

With these current beliefs, concepts of absolute belief and devotion to one God (or gods), comes the need to accept, in whole, or in part the “sacred writings” of the “describer” of the particular pathway to salvation, through Jesus, or others. By doing so, in having the need to keep belief in the “sacred writings” we close the door to better understanding of history and the route of travel we call “history.” We are forced to reject new facts to preserve our vision of the divine.

Many in the current culture continue to look at history mainly as a means to justify the sacred

writings. How much energy has been put into the questions of:

- Where is Noah's Ark?
- What caused the ten plagues in Egypt?
- What was the path the Hebrews took during the forty years of wandering?

Despite the energy and time, to date, real science and what we now call archeology, has mostly shown that the sacred writings are not "provable history." Yet still so many cling to the idea that they must be true, since it's in our sacred books, and we need our sacred books to achieve our individual salvation.

In the Christian West, what little history that is presented is often chauvinistic; It's unstated purpose of complying with the Christian or nationalist beliefs of the past. This approach is very problematic on so many levels, especially as we evolve out of the period of Western domination with its overt colonialism and cultural and religious assaults.

One of the major problems in this view of history is the rest of the world's peoples remember history differently, and are now in a position to demand respect for their world views. Without a religious free and non-Western chauvinist view of history and religion (and without the ending of absolutist religious views) the world becomes that kingdom or house that Jesus talks about

- 24If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

The religion and slanted history based on that religious view of the West becomes part of that house, and the different understanding of history (of the long term history of China, India, Persia, and so many others) is the other part of the house.

We simply have a very different conception of the world in these "two houses." The world based on the religion of absolutism is the house divided.

However, it used to be that the house divided was that of the world view of the Christians and the older traditional religions of the West. And then we saw a different approach by the early Christians, an approach of flexibility. The early Christians needed to explain, what was "good" and what was "evil" in an acceptable fashion to the followers of the other religions. They needed to explain to themselves and others, why rituals that were used for thousands of years, rituals used by the "winners" of the political and cultural wars, were no longer valid. The Christians also had to do this explaining of why the rituals were no longer needed, without really insulting those who used them:

- What did "good" look like? What did "evil" look like? And, how do you depict good and evil, without insulting those around you? Those were some of the key questions that the early Christians needed to answer.

When the early Christians were addressing these issues they developed somewhat different writings, or different means of telling the story, for different communities. We understand today that the "four gospels" were written for different groups (Jews, Greeks, intellectuals, and less educated other Gentiles etc.) with different messages in each version targeted for the

particular groups. We also recognize that Paul, unlike the “Jerusalem movement” of early Christians (or that of James the Just, which tried to keep Christianity in the camp of being Jewish) became extremely flexible in his approach to preaching to all the nations of the world. He needed to adjust the “good news” to appeal to the non-Jews; so Paul’s approach included the ending of the need for the requirements for kosher food, and for circumcision, etc therefore allowing the “Gentiles” to become Christians without the more restrictive lifestyle of the Jews. These were all tools to fit into a non-absolute world ... to make Christianity a flexible religion in a time of religious flexibility.

The early Christians also had to address how to explain the old gods of the Ancient and Classical world to people that were mostly still believers (and also to the rationalist and atheist of the time.) To do so, the early Christians first adopted the Jewish god for the potential Jewish converts (although there was a fight about this – one of the first major “heresies” – see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcionism> and also see <http://www.christianorigins.com/marcion.html>

- Marcion taught that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament was the “creating God,” but he was harsh, cruel, and incompetent. Marcion contrasted this creating God with the God of Jesus, who was nothing less than love and grace.

But they actually accepted the existence of all the “older gods” of the Ancient and Classical world, (including Ba’al). They did not say the old gods did not exist, they said that they were in fact real, but demons. After all, the stories of the Greek/Roman gods were filled with misdeeds, including rape and taking sides in war, so they could in fact appear to be as demons. These approaches to the old gods are more signs that in the early days, the religion was trying to find its voice by being flexible.

The Christians did, however, have to be careful in how to explain which of the traditional gods was actual “the Devil”, or the chief demon. They did not want to say that the image of Zeus/Jupiter, so beloved for so long, was actually what the devil looked like.

- (In fact, in the West, the image adopted by Christians of what God did look like was closely related to the image of Zeus/Jupiter, if less “buff” than the Classical gods). They also needed to adopt the image to something understandable to those of the East.



Jesus from 4th Cent AD



Apollo, the sun God as Good shepherd, 4th Century BC.

<http://www.jesusneverexisted.com/melange.html>

Therefore, the image of the Devil, soon evolved from the image of the old rival of the God of the Jews, that of Ba’al. And the practices and rituals of Ba’al (souls burning eternally)

became the image of the hell controlled by the Devil.

How Jesus came to be depicted in his present form is quite an interesting and relatively unexplored subject. The image of Jesus has taken on many motifs over the centuries, and continues to do so in the Modern age, as Black and Brown Jesus become more accepted. We no longer are subjected to the blond hair blue-eyed Jesus of the European colonial era, and depicted in movies such as the "*Greatest Story Ever Told*" where we have a German actor as Jesus. The early Christians used several images from popular gods (both Roman and Persian) as models for the physical depiction of Jesus. Initially, the images of Jesus were more designed for a Roman view, and he was often depicted as beardless younger man.

The most interesting possible model for Jesus was that of a newly created "god" whose cult worship was promoted by the Emperor Hadrian, during the time when Christianity was first becoming mentioned. This new god was Antinous, the young male lover of the Emperor Hadrian, who when he died in 130 AD at about the age of twenty, was deified by the Emperor.

- After his death, the grief of the emperor knew no bounds, causing the most extravagant respect to be paid to his memory. Cities were founded in his name, medals struck with his effigy, and statues erected to him in all parts of the empire.
- Worship, or at least acknowledgment, of the idealized Antinous was widespread, although mainly outside the city of Rome. As a result, Antinous is one of the best-preserved faces from the ancient world. Many busts, gems and coins represent Antinous as the ideal type of youthful beauty, often with the attributes of some special god. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinous>

One of the other options for portrayal of Jesus as a god is that of Mithras. One of the earliest known portrayal of Jesus is that of the "Good Shepherd" or as young man.

- The earliest surviving Christian art comes from the late 3rd and early 4th centuries on the walls of [Christian tombs](#) in the [catacombs](#). ... Here, Jesus is portrayed in two different ways: older, bearded and robed and another as a bare faced youth http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Images_of_Jesus

While mainly portrayed killing a bull, Mithras was often described as the "good shepherd." And so was Apollo, the Sun God of the Greeks. Early Christian imagery seems to have "borrowed" from the existing views of the divine of the time, in order to allow people to be able to relate to the new interpretation being given.

The early Christians had to also create a way to modify and adopt the critical rituals of the popular religions (including Ba'alism) to give them a new meaning and a new way to participate in the salvation offered by the rituals. They did so, by adopting many external elements of the religions of the time (making the birthday of the Sol Invictus the birthday of Christ, making Easter in line with the other sacred days of the other "rising gods, making the sharing of the food of the sacrifice part of the ritual of the communion with god.) The chief ritual of Ba'al, that of human sacrifice, as the central piece of the "new covenant" was represented as needed, but ended, by Christ's sacrifice. Again Christianity showed signs of being a flexible adopting religion.

- This was an awesome task which faced the early Christians, and it took hundreds of years to sort out the key issues, coming up with the right “sales pitch” and often with great internal fighting amongst themselves (all the heresies, etc).

However, once in power, once accepted by the state, this flexibility ended. Now the Church demanded conformity ... after some 350 years of coming up with the right message, it declared no more debate, only conformity, or else. We continue to live with the extensive fallout of this shift to this day. Millions have died in resistance to this inflexibility and the world today is in continuous danger based on this ongoing demand to conformity.

If there is a devil, if there is a great evil, its greatest tool is perhaps the ability to make one group of people believe they know all things, and are able to answer all things, absolutely, through their belief in a god, and only their god. And to commit any act and horror in the name of that god, is justified to bring that god’s message to others. Only horror has come from the belief that any act of repression is right to create conformity.

If this is the case, if absolutism is a tool of the devil, then we need to ask Jesus’ question again

- How can Satan drive out Satan?

And the answer is obvious that it can not be done. And therefore, if there is a devil, if there is Satan, and Satan can not drive out Satan, and the history of Christianity is such that it seems to use the “greatest tool of Satan”, this belief in absolutism, over and over again, our honest non-biased, non-religious based review of the blended political and religious history can lead to a conclusion that Christianity (not just the Roman Church, but all forms of Christianity, is a tool of Satan. Any absolutist religion is so and Christianity over its life has been the most absolutist and most demanding of conformity of any. So this conclusion is the opposite of the message of the early Christians ... that the Devil created religions that looked like Christianity to fool people into rejecting Christianity. The conclusion is that Christianity is the tool of the devil, created to eliminate acceptance of each other and to promote hatred (a chief tool of Satan).

Which of course, is not the conclusion of this book, since from a non-biased, non-religious based review of the blended political and religious history, we write from a perspective that there is no God or gods, and there is no Satan or the Devil, or no great evil one, nor is there the single god named Ba’al or a collection of gods referred to as Ba’al. We write from the perspective that there is no “divine.”

If there is no divine, then we are left with human chaos. And also human tendencies to destruction and the use of religion by humans to enhance this tendency to destruction through both internal rituals of death and external attacks on the “other,” those who are not true believers, or those who follow something other than what is “true.” Over time, in this Christian world, that belief in the “something other” has been collectively referred to as the belief in the Devil.

We now face the “end of days” in a more literal sense than we ever have before, with our new weapons of mass destruction, our ability to undo “evolution” by the mass destruction of species, and our ability to eliminate our safe haven of the earth’s environment by altering the planet’s ability to moderate its climate.

So now our basic religious needs (is there an after life, will I see my loved ones again) seem to be in conflict with our collective “greater good.” Our religious beliefs, our inability to de-link events of now from the concept of “God’s absolute will” and divine texts and our hope for the “after world” has profound impact on how we face each of these coming crises. The ability, or our inability, to purge religion from our concept of history, and also to purge it from our concepts of “what is to come,” will determine if we actually, as a species, survive the future.

There are far too many Christians who look forward to a nuclear war, as the precursor of the second coming of Jesus (sounds like something the Devil would like).

- There is the famous line from nearly 40 years ago of the U. S. Secretary of Agriculture, James Watt who said, “We don’t need to think about safeguarding the environment much, since Jesus is coming back soon.”

When he said that, Watt had to resign. It is unclear what would happen if a similar statement was made today by a high ranking official.

As we face a more capable world of other views of religion and the divine, we in the United States need to resist a return to absolutist religion. The house divided becomes more divided with our absolutism.

However, the real house that is divided today is not one religious fundamentalism verses another, what is the real divide is that of rationalists and believers. One of the last times the battle was such, the rationalists lost in a major way, and the West was plunged into the Dark ages (and the Devil was seen as the winner). We can only wait to see if the present religious conflict will give us similar results.



One of the other options for portrayal of Jesus is a god we will look at in great detail later, that of Mithras. One of the earliest know portrayal of Jesus is that of the “Good Shepherd” or as young man

- The earliest surviving Christian art comes from the late 3rd and early 4th centuries on the walls of [Christian tombs](#) in the [catacombs](#). ... Here, Jesus is portrayed in two different ways: older, bearded and robed and another as a bare faced youth http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Images_of_Jesus

Ba'al Theory of Christianity

A Rough Timeline

Covering the most of the time frame of the two books

The Phoenicians were clearly a people grounded in the belief systems of the Ancients. They expanded this world view into the land areas that would eventually be dominated by the Classical view. Simply for this fact alone, the Phoenicians are a people of major historical importance.

However, if some historians are correct, the true greatness of the Phoenicians will only be understood when we have a fuller understanding of the history of Africa, and perhaps even the New World, in ancient times. In other words, we need to know most of the history of the ancient world, and all the history of religions in this area dating back 10,000 years or so to fully appreciate the Phoenicians.

One of the main premises of these books is that the religion of the Phoenicians, through an older form of Judaism, and over a very long period, became a major influence on the development of Christianity. Specifically, the Phoenicians influenced the Christians' view of the way to appease God, and also the way to create a new covenant with God. This new covenant with God is the basis of Christianity and therefore the foundation of the religion. In my view, this new covenant may be nothing more than an old Phoenician one.

We will explore how the rituals of the religion of the Phoenicians were the inspiration for the "structure" of the death of Jesus, and therefore, central to the whole development of the Christian religion.

- This evolution of ritual from the Phoenicians to the Christians covers more than two thousand years, and is greatly intertwined with the history of the Jews, and their mostly failed history as a people in the world of Ancient and Classical politics. The people who became the Jews had multiple responses to the repeated historical failures. The remnants of the Jews at each point of failure created responses, at times clinging to the old beliefs. This resulted in multiple forms of Judaism, (some "modernized," some deeply traditional") which helped to create this bridge to the development of Christianity. In short, this is how Ba'alism influenced the new religion.

To begin to understand this concept of religious transition, we need to look at this timeline which will be greatly expanded upon later. (All these dates are "rough estimates")

- 15,000 – 1500 BC ... Organized religion is based in worship of the great Earth Mother. There is very little evidence, in many locations, of the concept of a Sky God, or in fact, any many male deity. (The timeline for

the Earth Mother religion denotes its dominance in some areas for this whole period. However, the dominance of the Mother Goddess began to erode starting as early as 6,000 in some places, and lasted until 1500 in some limited areas.

- 6000 BC to 2500 BC ... Phoenician religion evolves out of the Mother Goddess religion to incorporate the general religious views of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and becomes greatly influenced by the Sky God concepts of the Semites and later Indo Europeans. The male dominated pantheon of gods is developed, with the great mother still worshiped but in a secondary role. The key deities in the newer religion are the sun and the weather (or storm) gods. Many of the religious stories are based in agricultural events and on astrological observations.
- 3000 BC -250 BC ... the religion of Phoenicia is a major influence in the Southern Mediterranean Basin, dominating North Africa, the major islands of the Western Mediterranean, and half of what is now Spain. The influence spreads to mainland Europe, including Greece, and to what is now England, It is even possible that it spread to the Americas.
- 3,000 -1200 BC Phoenicia periodically under control or major influence of Egypt, but is more often a relatively free trading partner.
- 1750-1500 BC – Clear links between the development of Greek culture to Phoenician influence (Founder of Thebes, Cadmus, is a Phoenician prince.) The Greek develop/adopt Phoenician pantheon with new names)
- 1600 -1200 BC The invasion of the “Hyksos,” “Sea People” and other nomadic peoples greatly destabilizes the Eastern Mediterranean areas, It is possible that the eruption of the San Torini volcano impacts the strength of rivals such as Crete and Egypt. Phoenicia survives and becomes more independent and more dominant in the Eastern Mediterranean area. They become almost completely dominant in all Mediterranean trade.
- 1100 -1000 BC, in the highlands of what is now the “Holy Lands”, a small and unimportant area of Phoenician influence, the cult of Yahweh, modeled greatly on Phoenician religion, develops.
- Between 1000 BC and 650 BC, internal struggles between the Yahweh cultists leads to disunity and great internal struggles in what was the southern area dominated by the Phoenicians (or Canaanites). Religious struggles concern mainly the role of Yahweh. The debate was over whether he was a sole god, chief god, or just a god. There were also questions over the proper ways to offer prayers and sacrifice to him and other gods. Mostly the proponents of Yahweh are in an inferior political position throughout this period

- 900 – 650 BC – Assyrian and Neo- Babylonian domination of Eastern Mediterranean. Phoenicia is attacked often, with major defeats, but manages to stave off complete domination by the new powers. Phoenicia creates more support for it's Western Mediterranean colonies as a means for escaping, if needed, from the new powers.
- Minor and relatively unimportant semi-Yahwehist kingdoms (Israel and Judah) are both destroyed with minimal effort by the super powers, and the peoples there are mostly exiled.
- 600-550 BC Yahwehists in exile in Babylon create a new religion with Yahweh as sole god, and declare that all defeats were Yahweh's punishment for the failure to comply with Yahweh's laws and mandates. (People now called Jews). Holy books rewritten and codified.
- 550 – 325 BC Persia dominates Eastern Mediterranean, with Phoenicia as a major ally in the Persian wars with the Greeks.
 - Yahwehist cult allowed to return to "Judea" to rebuild their temple and to establish a colony of believers. Less than 10% of the Jews" return to Judea. (There are Four major division of "Jews" at this time ... Returnees, those in Babylon, those who had fled to Egypt at the time of conquest, and those who had remained in Judea at the time of conquest.)
 - Persian religions influence the whole area (with new concepts of dualism, of heaven and hell (existence of the Devil), the resurrection of the dead, and many other new ideas which influence all the religions of the area, including the Jews. These are mostly resisted by the Phoenicians, in an effort to maintain cultural (if not limited political) independence.
- 325 – 150 BC Hellenistic (Greek) conquests of Eastern Mediterranean and cultural domination of the area. Phoenicia suffers great defeats and loses trading control to the Greeks; Phoenician remnants (including Carthage) put far greater efforts in the Western Mediterranean, including Spain.
 - "Classical world view" (Hellenism) mostly replaces "Ancient world" at least as the dominant culture of the rulers.
 - Phoenicia loses in wars with Alexander and also in the Punic Wars with Rome, Carthage is destroyed, Phoenicia is

- “Hellenized,” Spain and other areas of Phoenician influence are occupied by Rome.
- 140 BC – 140 AD Jewish war of resistance against Classical domination
 - 135 – 65 BC Judea rebels against the Greeks' successor (to Alexander) kings, unifies around religious issues, creates brief independent state (the Second Jewish Commonwealth) under strong “orthodox religious” efforts ... force converts peoples of the area (including Galilee and southern Phoenicia to “orthodox Judaism” Jews offer alternative world view to both Ancients and Hellenization
 - (65 BC – 65 AD Jewish state under Roman control, with a relative hands off policy concerning religion, Jews often prosper under Roman rule, but resent direct rule.
 - 66 AD – 135 AD Rome crushes a series of three major (and a number of minor) Jewish revolts and destroys Judea, the Second Temple. Rome nearly exterminates the Jews in much of the Eastern Mediterranean world. The large Jewish presence in Egypt is repressed. The only other large Jewish community in Babylonia survives almost untouched by Roman efforts. Loss in revolts eliminates the Jewish alternative as a “player” in the struggle between Ancients and Classical world views.
- 65 BC – 650 AD Roman (Byzantine) Domination of the Eastern Mediterranean
- 70 AD – 650 AD Christianity develops.

Christianity is a merging and morphing of the Ancient, Classical, Persian, and Jewish world views. Elements of all four are combined into a new “unified religion” for the Roman world.

- Extensive competition within the Christian communities, as well as strong competition from other (mainly Ba’alist and Persian based religions) leads to new, combined religions supported by the Emperors under the “One Emperor, One God,” paradigm.
- New religion puts far more emphasis on an afterlife, and the fate of souls than any other previous religion. It develops a major role for the Devil.
- Once power is obtained, Christians strongly represses “Classicalist” view with extensive killings, “burning of books” and other overt acts to eliminate the concepts of the Classical world.

- Extensive fighting internally among Christians continues concerning the rites and rituals of the new religion, leading to great division and regional conflicts over point of the religion.
- 650 AD and on ... Muslim invasions attempt to eliminate the Classical and Ancient world views and mainly support the world view of the Yahwehists.
 - Iconoclasts and Luther and other Protestantism can be seen as the response to the Islamic efforts around a return to Yahwehism.
- 650 – 1492 Reduced Christian world is mostly devoid of importance and knowledge for hundreds of years, attempting to fend off Muslims, Vikings, Mongols and a host of other peoples. The Church often invokes “God’s wrath,” through use of forced conformity and disallowing any thought not represented as good in the Bible.

As we can see from this time line, the Phoenicians were a major and important people, for much longer of a time frame than is n generally recognized. Their religion was mainly constant, dominating the area of their homeland, and was spread over wide areas by the Phoenician traders and colonies.

The “Jews” during most of this time, were a minor people, facing defeat after defeat and for most their existence they offered little to the world. (And there is little place in “history” to support the stories of the Exodus and the Davidic Empire as “fact”) Their religion was a minor player in the events of most of the time.