God the King, the Father, the Brother, the Ghost. A Short Sermon.

Robert G. Brown
Duke University Physics Department
Durham, NC 27708-0305
rgb@phy.duke.edu

January 13, 2010

Books by Robert G. Brown

- *The Book of Lilith*

  ISBN: 978-1-4303-2245-0

  Lilith is the *first* person to be given a soul by God, and is given the job of giving all the things in the world souls by loving them, beginning with Adam. Adam is given the job of making up rules and the definitions of sin so that humans may one day live in an ethical society. Unfortunately Adam is weak, jealous, and greedy, and insists on being on *top* during sex to "be closer to God".

  Lilith, however, refuses to be second to Adam or anyone else. *The Book of Lilith* is a funny, sad, satirical, uplifting tale of her spiritual journey through the ancient world soulgiving and judging to find at the end of that journey – herself.

- *The Fall of the Dark Brotherhood*

  ISBN: 978-1-4303-2732-5

  A straight-up science fiction novel about an adventurer, Sam Foster, who is forced to flee from a murder he did not commit across the multiverse. He finds himself on a primitive planet and gradually becomes embroiled in a parallel struggle against the world's pervasive slave culture and the cowled, inhuman agents of an immortal of the multiverse that support it. Captured by the resurrected clone of its wickedest agent and horribly mutilated, only a pair of legendary swords and his native wit and character stand between Sam, his beautiful, mysterious partner and a bloody death!

- *Who Shall Sing, When Man is Gone*

  Original poetry, including the epic-length poem about an imagined end of the world brought about by a nuclear war that gives the collection its name. Includes many long and short works on love and life, pain and death.

  > Ocean roaring, whipped by storm
  > in damned defiance, hating hell
  > with every wave and every swell,
  > every shark and every shell
  > and shoreline.

- *Hot Tea!*

  More original poetry with a distinctly Zen cast to it. Works range from funny and satirical to inspiring and uplifting, with a few erotic poems thrown in.

  > Chop water, carry
  > wood. Ice all around,
  > fire is dying. Winter Zen?

- *Classical Electrodynamics*

  A set of lecture notes intended to support the second semester of a two semester course based on J. D. Jackson's book of the same name, although it can also stand alone as a textbook. These notes are under development (and are actively being used to teach) and are not guaranteed to be either complete or correct, but most students will nevertheless find them *useful*.

- *How to Engineer a Beowulf Cluster*

  An online classic for years, this is the print version of the famous free online book on cluster engineering. It too is being actively rewritten and developed, no guarantees, but it is probably still useful in its current incarnation.

All of these books can be found on the online Lulu store here:

http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=877977

Both *The Book of Lilith* and *The Fall of the Dark Brotherhood* are also available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble and other online booksellers, and one day from a bookstore near you!

It is worth noting that this document records a small bit of the philosophy that underlies the story told in *The Book of Lilith*. If you like the one (or find yourself enraged but engaged by the one) you'll probably like (or find yourself enraged) by the other.

Contents

Chapter 1

The Many Aspects of God

Religion is a puzzle. It is easy to see from a look at the history of the many religions that at one time or another have held or continue to hold sway within one or another of the equally diverse cultures that it has played an important, even a critical role in the "civilization" of mankind. Belief in God seems rooted in two aspects of the way our minds work that helped us evolutionarily bootstrap from animal to man, from a state of reflexive reaction to our immediate environment to reflective contemplation of our past, our present, and our future.

These two aspects (which are not cleanly separated, of course) are:

- *Causality*
- *Pattern Recognition*

It is worth saying a brief word now about each.

Nature at first glance appears chaotic and highly random. When a child is born it is as likely as not to play in the street, to fall down the stairs, to stick hairpins in electrical sockets (I myself did this last one at the age of two, getting third degree burns on all the fingers of my right hand in the process and doubtless confirming my destiny to one day become a physicist). We have no *intrinsic* knowledge of probability or the relationships between causes and effects. If you play in the street, cars will break your bones. If you do not keep your balance in high places, gravity will break your bones. If you place a thin piece of wire across two poles with 120 VAC potential difference and plenty of power-delivery capacity, that piece of wire will vaporize and in the process seriously damage the small fingers that hold it.

We can learn these relationships by abstracting the knowledge from experience and observation and instruction. Deer cannot – some twenty deer a year are killed on the highways within two miles of where I'm sitting as I type this. In order for deer to learn not to "play in the street" we have to *evolve better deer* by killing off generations of the ones that were too stupid to avoid being hit. Eventually either we'll end up with deer that instinctively shy away from black strips of rock or deer will get smart enough to flee from the mere sound of a car, but we aren't there yet.

This process of abstraction, the linking of a spaciotemporal chain of cause and effect, (and the mental hardware that enabled it to happen) proved extremely valuable from an evolutionary point of view to early humans. Survivors were the ones that *discovered patterns* in the seeming chaos and *inferred causal rules* from the patterns that were "simple" and could be taught to offspring. "Don't play in the street." "Watch that you don't fall down the stairs or jump out of trees." And yes, "Put caps on unused electrical outlets when you have small children until you can teach them that electricity is dangerous," (although in my case it was maybe 1958 and alas, such caps had not yet been invented).

One way of viewing the invention of the concept of God, then, is as a *side-effect* of the rapid development of the pattern-matching capability in our brains. Patterns become causes, and knowledge of cause is all about *survival*, but the patterns of causality are often subtle and the world is highly chaotic and largely unpredictable.

This was especially true in the distant past, when many of the root causes for things were still hidden within the flood of seemingly unique but similar events. Our brains demanded explanations but could not find them all as we did not yet know how to conduct a systematic search. It was natural, then, to for us to create a "super-cause" and assign it its own *capricious* nature, one that closely mirrored our own capricious natures and the seeming capriciousness of the many events we could not understand in terms of elementary causes. How easy, once this super-cause was imagined, to assign it as the root cause of any spurious or passing pattern observed by our ever more powerful pattern-abstraction engines.

Once nucleated in this way, religions almost immediately became major factors in the *social* co-evolution that was perhaps even more important than straight biological evolution in determining whose genes would live and whose would die. Humans in social groups, through cooperative enterprises, had outlived and outreproduced humans who did not since long before they were in any recognizable sense human. They already had social structure, pecking order, reproductive rights, and of course the all important transmission of discovered pattern information to their offspring *without* the requirement of each individual having to live through a close encounter with each possible fatal mistake to learn of them.

Sweetheart, don't play with the saber-toothed kitty even if it does look soft and cuddlesome. Snake may well taste like chicken, but watch for the end with the eyes and the fangs. That's the chief's woman, and looking cross-eyed at her when he's around will get your brains knocked out with a club.

Social groups with a hierarchical structure are by definition a pattern, and it was and continues to be very much an evolutionary advantage to extend and generalize patterns, so what could be more natural than to *subsume* the pattern-explaining cause known as "God" (or more likely, Gods plural) into the pattern of social hierarchy. Large predators and small snakes can "understandably" cause you to die, but nobody can quite understand why one day you can defy the risk and eat tasty snake, and the very next your hand slips or you come on one unawares and are transformed from a living, aware being into an inert lifeless mass that quickly rots or is eaten in turn. Randomness, the truly unpredictable, *frightens* us and rightly so. That which we don't know or understand can and will kill us, and so can that which we *know* or *partly* understand, leaving us hungry for the rest of the explanation so we can *control it!*

Causality, of course, is all about control. If we understand we can *always* kill the snake and arrange it so that it *never* kills us. We can wipe out sabertooths altogether so that they disappear as a risk to our selves and our children. We can figure out that it is a good idea to cover electrical sockets to eliminate the *chance* of an uncontrolled event causing a tragedy and reducing one of our beautiful, sweet children to a pile of corruption or a small vase filled with ash.

If God is a universal cause, a super-cause, the explanation for 'why *here*' and 'why *now*', then should we not seek to control *this* cause too? Our pattern recognition facilities are always at work, provisionally transferring successful patterns from one domain to another in the hopes that a match may be found.

Thus, when we note that our tribal chief (or any other "random" bully) is perhaps less likely to brain us when we praise him extravagently, less likely to brain us when we regularly give him some of our possessions, more likely to reward us with similar privileges of our own when we are his strong supporters in the social hierarchy, how *natural* that we generalize and extend the hierarchy on to *God*, to seek to control *God* by means of praise, of sacrifice, by being good members of a *religious* hierarchy that (of course) is entertwined with the social secular hierarchy and supports it because it works better that way from the point of view of survival.

Of course we as a species have, fairly recently as these things go, *transcended* this complex social-religious pattern. Since the Enlightenment, our understanding of the physical universe has blossomed to where we now *understand* how *everything* works. Sure, there are details we are still working on, and we are still trapped in a chaotic universe where much that happens (for all of our deep understanding of *how* it happens) is *unpredictable*, but in recent years we have come to understand even that, to be able to quantify its unpredictability as it were. We can take random number generators (that are not at all random, of course) and put them to work inside simple, ultimately entirely deterministic algorithms and produce with computers patterns that are compellingly similar to the ones we observe in nature – snowflakes and trees, erosion patterns and fingerprints, even the mystery of how the brain itself works is slowly yielding to the inexorable *advance* of science, as one experiment after another, one insight after another extends our understanding to ever more subtle and complex phenomena.

The Enlightenment also brought into being the idea of *religious freedom* as it became more and more apparent that large parts of accepted religious belief were (to put it bluntly) simply *wrong*. However strongly these beliefs formed the core of a system of social and cultural rules that *was* our society at the time, they just plain turned out not to be the case, to directly contradict *every observation* made of the actual Universe in which we live.

In other work[1] I explore in considerable detail both what went right and what went wrong on this process, and how in spite of some of the philosophical problems that were discovered during the Enlightment we can have a *mostly* rational view of the Universe with a reasonably sound and consistent basis for what we call knowledge. The purpose of this work is different. In it, I wish to proffer a *social polemic* against the surviving *negative* aspects of the world's primary religions.

Not all of aspects of religion are negative, mind you. They do great good as well as great evil. However the parts that are negative are almost without exception *insane* as well, in the sense that they are either *indefensible physical constructs* that directly contradict what we have learned from the *defensible* system of post-Enlightenment science and knowledge or they are *anthropomorphic extrapolations and projections* of human social structures onto that which we call God. Some of the latter are very good – they have provided an ethical foundation for human culture without which civilization could never have emerged. Some of the latter are deeply evil, and lead to strife, conflict, and much human suffering. Let us try to understand this.

[1] The book *Axioms*, soon to be released within my Lulu store whose URL should appear at the beginning of this document.

Chapter 2

A Human God

One of the greatest puzzles about human religion is the way that successful religions (which generally pay at least lip service to virtues such as love, brotherhood, righteous living, spiritual enlightenment, charity, hope, and other good things) have historically managed to be the basis for some of the bloodiest and longest running conflicts in the history of mankind. These conflicts have lasted *thousands of years* in some cases, and are being actively continued to this very day.

The purpose of this short article is to indicate how this puzzle can be understood in terms of the persistence of certain human *metaphors* in the greater religious dialectic. To put it bluntly, we (as a species) took the templates of human culture and transformed and extrapolated them into the templates for our understanding of God, and then intertwined the templates back through the parent cultures so that they formed a single socio-memetic superorganism. These cultural superorganisms had to *compete* for resources and human membership, and the successful ones spread out at the expense of the unsuccessful ones. Since "success" throughout human history has nearly always meant "successful in war", truly pacifistic religious cultures either disappeared (sometimes without a trace) the instant they were confronted by a more powerful, *non*-pacifist religious culture, or else they quickly evolved teeth and claws of their own from memetic transfer and survive.

There are again numerous examples of this, but one of the most interesting in microcosm is the early evolution of the Christian church in external competition with paganism, Judaism and other religions as well internal competition with the vast range of e.g. gnostic "heresies"[1] that sprang into being on the basis of various revelations and scriptures. Only when secular authority (Constantine) endorsed Christianity and it devel-

[1] A word that means *choice*, note well – choices that were eventually violently suppressed.

oped the ability and will to act violently did Christianity become the unified superorganism that literally exploded across the world, slaughtering its competition both internally (heretical sects) and externally (paganism and other religions) if they refused to convert.

Only in very recent times – really only since the Enlightenment – has religion been forced to propagate and sustain itself in open competition in *heterogeneous* cultures through *non*-violent means. For the first time in recorded history religions have been forced to *convince* non-adherents to join on the basis of reason, by force of argument rather than backed by a sword. This in turn has created various problems, since all religions share an *essentially irrational* core based on *faith* that is, in fact, a form of *anti*-reason.

It is quite possible, of course, that historical purists and defenders of various faiths are going to disagree with one or another aspect of the sweeping generalizations above. They might point out that e.g. early Christians took their religion to Rome on a non-violent basis, that Christ commanded us to love one another. I reiterate, nearly all religions share a common core of virtues to which they pay *lip service*, but the religions and sects that *survived* long enough to leave their historical mark (with one exception that is not, properly speaking, a religion) survived by the sword, not by the word.

In the specific case of Christianity, note that it failed utterly to take root at its point of origin (in the Middle East). It was deliberately taken to the center of the world, the capital of the dominant culture of the day, where it proliferated *and diversified* among the subservient class as a form of *social* rebellion against the established elitist ruling culture. The emergence of a dominant, virulent memetic variant occurred as the result of a process that is strikingly similar to the emergence of a virulent strain of bacteria within a population that acts as a biological reservoir.

The key transformation that led to the emergence of the Catholic church was without any doubt the forced alteration of Christianity from a rebel faith into one that openly embraced and intertwined with the secular authority that literally ruled the Western world of the day. Constantine realized that whether or not the Christians were *right* (it seems likely that he never really believed that they were), they were *convenient* as they promised rewards in heaven for being a good little peasant now. At least *some* of the church fathers were absolutely thrilled to provide reciprocation for official sanction in the form of *divine right to rule*, and in so doing *their* particular variant of Christianity achieved instant evolutionary dominance.

In exchange for this (somewhat corrupt) deal, which involved a *mandated* (by Constantine) purging of the (at the time) highly diverse "apostolic Christianity" of e.g. the gnostic gospels and Arianism as "subversive" heresies that had the wrong social paradigm for a divinely sanctioned Emperor, Christianity "instantly" became the state religion of a major chunk of the world. In this Faustian process, perhaps it lost its own immortal soul as it sought to spread and perpetuate its message of "love" through the use of naked force and coercion, steel and fire, the rack and the noose, for well over a thousand years (a process that continues, barely muted, to this very day).

Islam has followed this pattern even more strongly, as we shall see below. Hinduism and Judaism were never divorced from it – these religions directly co-evolved with the prevailing tribal or feudal culture. Even not-exactly-religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism have a history that involves winning over dominant secular rulers as converts who thereafter actively promoted it in order to establish a dominant social-religious culture (although in fairness, Buddhism was so supported and promoted by Ashoka strictly by non-violent means, *after* he had conquered an immense empire with the sword in which he was able to peacefully promote it).

Another common "violent" factor within all the major successful religions is that they contain explicitly coercive violent dogmas. Unfortunately this is true even of semi-religions such as Buddhism, where the whole point is to be liberated from an asserted (but scientifically unsupported) cycle of rebirth into "hell" – this world of presumed suffering. It is far more evident in the case of e.g. Christianity and Islam.

It is a historical fact that both of these faiths were spread by "nonviolent" missionaries (to the extent that this ever did happen unaccompanied by conquering armies *sooner* or later) by communicating a message of *hell-fire and damnation!* Christ the gentle brother appeals to peasants, sure, but peasants didn't actually run things at the time (and even peasants enjoy a nice pagan orgy from time to time). The conversion message, well-supported by scripture, was and is to this day very much the (paraphrased) following:

Screw the threat to your physical body while you are *alive* from our sword-wielding companions who are coming, never fear, for booty and land in their own good time. Either you adopt our faith (and fork over your wealth and land in our God's name without forcing us to resort to the violence we deplore) or our God will *throw you into a fiery furnace* and *burn you for eternity* in a state where *you will never die*, where mere cessation from the greatest pain you can ever imagine would be a blessing and a relief! Our God is *so nasty* that he will go crazy on your ass like the worst human psychopath you can *possibly* imagine and will do so *forever* if you don't get down on your knees *right now* and recite the following magical phrases to appease him.

To quote the Koran, 22:19-22:23:

> Garments of fire have been prepared for the unbelievers. Scalding water shall be poured upon their heads, melting their skins and that which is in their bellies. They shall be lashed with

> rods of iron. Whenever, in their anguish, they try to escape from Hell, back they shall be dragged, and will be told: 'Taste the torment of the Conflagration!'

Not to be outdone, Matthew 13:42:

> ...and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

or perhaps Mark 9:43-48:

> ...and if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.

If that's not spreading the faith through the *direct, naked threat of violence*, I don't know what is. A mere "sword" is tame by comparison. But let us return to our muttons.

In the light of reason and free choice, passages such as these that portray God the Psychopath seem disturbing. Small wonder that religions that portray hell as a state experienced here on Earth brought about by our own choices (such as Hinduism and Buddhism) have made considerable headway, as this is something that all people *experience* during their lifetime and doesn't make God out to be a *flaming lunatic*.

Still, our goal is not just to observe the truth of these words, but to understand *why* this evil came about, and just *what* parts of the metaphors and templates and rituals and beliefs of religion are evil in the sense of the word that is immediately and intuitively available to us, without worrying too much about all the Socratic bullshit or Aristotelian ideals on just what the good, or bad, *really* is.

After all, if you are reading these words and aren't a nut-case yourself you have some idea of good and bad that we'd likely mutually agree on. We might, for example, manage to agree that hurting people for pleasure or out of some sort of twisted desire for revenge is bad, helping people learn from their mistakes and being generally nice to them is good, all things being equal. There are other places we might disagree, of course, especially if you happen to think that it is bad of me to refuse to mindlessly accept your particular view of deity and think that it is *so* good of you to *accept* that view that it somehow makes it OK for you to hurt people, or steal, or force your views on others by means of secular force if the end result is their conversion and hence salvation or just the lesser result of the continuation of your own secular social power.

These metaphors were introduced in part due to the inadequacy of the human languages common at the time when the fundamental religious doctrines of the various faiths of today where laid down in scripture to describe *mathematical* ideas such as "domain", and related *logical* ideas such as the analysis of causal chains and empirical reasoning where they necessarily must occur in any discussion of the *infinite* (a mathematical concept once again) and hence God. Reasoning about infinity is subtle and fraught with peril *even in modern mathematics* where at least it can be fairly carefully defined and understood and where it can be consistently manipulated according to a set of rules.

The particular metaphors in question were also, as noted above, derived from from the prevailing *social structure* of that time. Unable to wrap their human heads and words around an abstract and mathematical God, God has been presented as a construct based almost entirely and obviously on *antropomorphic projections and extrapolations* of human archetypes, of existing figures in human culture. Consequently, across nearly *all* cultures and *all* times God or the Gods, as the case may be, have been presented over and over again as:

- The *Ruler*: God the King, Lord God.

  There is little doubt of the origin of this concept. Human kings aspired to the powers religion ascribed to deity (and indeed not infrequently *were* endowed with Divine Rights if not outright deity). So did religious "kings", the leaders of the religious groups themselves. Prophets and priests, saints and sinners, all aspired (and continue to aspire) to govern others besides themselves, to *rule over a dominion.* God in this aspect is thus this most base, greedy, and cruel aspect of our own selves.

- The *Father*: God the Father (and to lesser extent in modern culture God the Mother).

  This metaphor again has clear roots in sexual procreation among humans and the sense of duty and responsibility and love engendered by the process of creation. But the Father is also the ruler, the punisher. Disobey your real father and you get cast out, you get a spanking, you get time out, you get a stern talking to. Disobey God and you are cast into a fiery pit after death, or afflicted with plagues and torments in this life. But God is a stern and impersonal Father, not terribly nice, as one can easily love him and obey all His rules as best you understand them and *still* get cancer at the age of forty, *still* experience the anguish of the death of a child, *still* be vivisected in a Nazi torture chamber.

- The *Brother*: God the merely Human.

  The metaphor of parenthood and the yearning of the human spirit towards power and control has not infrequently been inverted to create God the Avatar (Krishna) or God the Son (Christ) as the *objects* of the attentions of the paternal and imperial manifestations of deity. These "human" Gods suffer as we do the ailments of the flesh, find themselves in battles for life and death, eat and excrete and have sex, and eventually die (sometimes rather horribly). God the human struggles, as we do, to do the best that they can *given the rules* that govern the Universe, the laws of physics as it were. Sometimes they in principle have the power to remake reality in an instant to the shape of their desire, to work miracles. However, there is *no discernible logic* in the way that they exercise this power. They cure this one's blindness, that one's lameness, but what of all the other blind and lame that they leave uncured?

If one has the power to end evil and choose not to do so, does that not *make* you evil, impose on you the ultimate burden for the sin? God our Brother, for whatever reason, cannot or will not do so, and if it is truly cannot, he (or she, God our Sister works equally well) indeed becomes our equal. Christ our brother was very much the message of the suppressed Gnostic gospels, but it did not mesh well with the *political* needs for God the Ruler to be made manifest on Earth by the Holy Roman Emperor and never stood a chance.

- The *Ghost*: God the Holy Spirit.

  This is in many ways the least popular, the least understood, metaphor for deity. It is the one view of God that is *stripped of all humanity* but, perhaps, the essence of awareness itself. *This* is the view of God that is most abstract, the most mathematical, related to the concepts of original cause, infinity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence. The Holy Spirit cares nothing for ruling men as if they were vassals of some feudal lord, it cares nothing for parenting people as if they were sons and daughters of the flesh carrying some sort of heritable evolutionary material, it is *not human at all* (to the extent where we refer to *it*, rather than *he* or *she*). It is the ultimate abstraction of existence in comparison to non-existence. Yet human religions impart even to the Holy Spirit one gentle aspect of humanity, that of the compassionate Self. The Holy Spirit, the Atman, is that within us that serves for better or worse to generate the essential map between Self and Other, to form as a basis for ethics and knowledge. It is the ultimate answer to the question: "Who is this that is reading these words, clothed in the apparent flesh of my body, experiencing and remembering the world?"

It will be argued below that of these diverse views or metaphors of deity, only the last one, *God the Holy Spirit* has the required *mathematical* attributes that we commonly associate with God. It will *also* be argued below that the various churches and religions inevitably (for social reasons) inherited the *wicked* elements of the human-derived metaphors, and that they are directly responsible for much of the remaining evil in the world today.

Let us continue, then, with the rest of this polemic and explore each of these points in turn. In the process, perhaps we will be able to see just a bit better what God is *not* by stripping away the arrogant, egotistical anthropomorphism (generally speaking a *patriarchal*, gender biased anthropomorphism at that) that we have imposed on God.

Chapter 3

God the King

By preaching of *God the King*, many of the world's religions, in particular the Judeo-Christian-Muslim (JCM) faiths, continue to propagate a vision of *mundane* power and glory, of kingship here on earth, as if it is good for God to *rule* men as a king, so it must be good for one Man to *rule* other men (to be like unto God). What, then, is the perpetual war in the Middle East between Jew and Christian and Muslim but men seeking to further this view of God, that it is their *divine right and duty* to conquer and rule this land of all lands, to impose their will and vision of all possible wills and visions, to establish their *dominion* as *God's dominion*.

Faugh! It sickens me, and it should sicken you as well. Humanity since the Enlightenment has been in the process of *systematically ridding the world of Kings* and good riddance to them all. It is high time we cast out God the King as a metaphor of deity, as there is *no possible way* that the river of human blood that has soaked into the ground in the Middle East is justified. This is a demented and ancient kind of *idolatry*, the perversion of the vision of God into a twisted version of our *own* desires and used as the merest of excuses to further them.

The view of God as a ruler or king of the Universe is an obvious extrapolation of the well-understood feudal concept of a human as the lord of a domain, who may be beholding to the king of the kingdom, who in turn may be beholding to the emperor of many kingdoms. Let us examine the "ideal" of these concepts (the ones that the ruler at any given level *wishes* were correct) before they get modified and corrupted by "politics", limitations of power, and all of those random circumstances of a world dominated by evolution both memetic and genetic.

The chief of a tribe or lord of some small domain has the power of life and death over his people, "owns" all of the land in that domain, and directs the power of the state to defend or extend that state against is neighbors. As the owner of all things (including, in some sense, both the serfs and vassals), they control the distribution of wealth and regulate commerce with those neighbors, if any.

In the inevitable course of memetic/social *evolution*, as one lord or chieftan gets by luck or strategem gains power over an ever larger domain, they direct more power, converting one or more of their competing neighboring domains into their own and appointing their own vassals to hold them on their behalf. The lord becomes a king, of sorts, the ruler of many vassals who are themselves lords over vassals of their own who in turn are masters of their household and any serfs it might contain.

This forces consolidation of the neighboring domains into kingdoms, as a kingdom almost by definition is the master of any neighboring domain that does not participate in a structure of equal strength. Of course all kingdoms are *not* equal in strength, and in the fullness of time kings emerge that successfully conquer entire neighboring kingdoms. Again, vassal kings are appointed (often from the king's own family) and the king becomes an *emperor*, the king of kings.

As before, an empire can only be opposed by other empires of roughly equal power. They quickly expand until geographic boundaries and the problems of logistic support and communication far away from the center of power limit its growth, or until its boundaries collide with the boundaries of another empire. *So far* in world history, no emperor has managed to extend dominion over the entire globe, to form the "last empire" as a true ruler of the Earth, although we have had a number of creditable attempts within the last hundred years, where the invention of technology created a window where *in principle* such an empire was possible[1].

The main point is that *every human* in this system has the *evolutionary imperative* to aspire to the next level of power above their own. The serf wishes to be a vassal, the vassal wishes to become a lord, the lord connives to become king, the king dreams of becoming emperor, and the emperor – what do they dream of becoming? They already rule the *world* as far as they can see, as far as one can travel in months or even years from the center of their power.

They wish to rule it *all*, to become master of their *own* lives and deaths, to no longer be bound by physical law but rather to gain a magical power to reorder all things. They aspire to become *God*. And so, of course, do all the lesser orders in the feudal structure, where even the lowliest serf at least dreams of "promoting" to emperor through luck, politics, and the taking of risks.

This is the practical, political side that has ever been matched up agains humanity's need to seek causes and to discover patterns in the disordered Universe that surrounds them. With such a powerful pattern already at

[1]Note that this is not a political or historical polemic, so we will not dwell on the instabilities of this evolutionary model that cause empires to fall, kingdoms to split, and of course new paradigms like that of *democracy* to emerge.

hand, is it any wonder that it was extended one more level, from emperor to God?

This did not happen uniformly, by any means. In some cultures the dominant ruler *became* gods themselves, and commanded ritual magic on behalf of their kingdoms or empires. In others the prevailing human politics of the many petty kingdoms, constantly warring, with family relations between the kings themselves was simply cloned into a family of gods with a chief god and many related gods, constantly themselves in conflict, so that human conflict was merely an inverted reflection, a reflection of a reflection as it were, of conflict in the heavens.

In *all* cases, however, a successful state integrated tightly with the prevailing religion, because gods *trumped* kings in the political hierarchy. If they were in conflict, it was easy to nucleate rebellion and revolution as of course the entire system from the beginning was based upon the *myth* that the strong can ever rule the weak, a myth that for most of human history was a self-fulfilling rule that prevented the people from quickly discovering that collectively, any group of people is stronger than any single member so that the many serfs, ultimately can rule over the strongest king and cast them down.

This *revolutionary* capability of religion is manifested by the phrase “with God (or the Gods) on our side”. It is also manifested as the divine right of kings. Wars were fought with the magic associated with *divine intervention*, which would manipulate all the random factors associated with victory so that the kingdom which *really* was hooked into the power of God would win each conflict. As the winners wrote the history books, this myth became very, very solidly entrenched in *every* human culture[2]. The primary historical epics of the human race, the *Mahabaharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Iliad*, the Nordic sagas, the myths of the Greeks and the Romans, and of course the Bible – all are *religious* texts as well as histories, all are testaments to the primary thesis of “Our kings won these battles with God on our side, and when we lost a battle it was because our faith was being tested or because we had failed in some ritual or in our devotion.”

God was *indeed* seen as the power that regulated victory in battle, and hence security in life. When your kingdom or empire won a war, greater or lesser, it *profited*. The life of every member of the winning community improved, as the greater wealth and security associated with victory paid its dividends, just as the loser paid the penalty in blood and loss of status. God is the primary cause of all things, and hence is the primary cause of our victory in battle, and defeat is *prima facie* evidence that one is worshipping the wrong God, a notion that was only challenged, rather weakly, by groups that had a long enough history of rising from defeat

[2]Probably not, but the exceptions are so few and rare as to be ignorable. Besides, it is almost mathematical. The *ultimate* winners in every conflict were *obviously* the ones with God on their side, if everything that happens is the will of God. Our ancestors won, therefore their Gods were the true Gods. Evolution in action, even here...

(something that of course was mediated and brought about by God for those faithful enough to persevere in their belief and following of the rituals through the tribulations in between) that they could sustain their religious and cultural identity as serfs in those kingdoms where it was permitted at all.

In many it was not, and rather sensibly. As noted aove, dissident religions are *always* a potential source of revolutionary instability. It is no accident that Spain housed the Inquisition and purged all religions competing with the prevailing Catholicism internally in blood and fire, then purged all religions so competing in the territories they conquered, and that those territories are overwhelmingly Catholic still today. Nor is it an accident that India's repartition occurred because its Muslim conquerors *failed* to purge it of Hinduism however hard they tried, that America's and France's revolutions occurred because their people no longer accepted their emperors as divine.

The world's most *successful* religions, with a single exception, are fundamentally based on the myth or anthropomorphic projection of *God the King*. In Hinduism, the most successful kings of the ages *were* Gods. Krishna and Rama are both kings and God incarnate. When Hinduism was faced with "competition" of a sort from Buddhism (which does *not* make this assertion and indeed is the *one religion* that does not discuss an anthropomorphic "God" *at all*) they simply swallowed it whole by making the Buddha an incarnation of Vishnu as well. The Hindu pantheon forms a court, and within that court the usual games of intrigue and conflict occur, with demons and devils playing the role of the "outsider" human culture that opposes the prevailing empire and limits its absolute power.

In the JCM tradition, we begin with an abstract creator but quickly learn that he created mankind *in his own image*. Never mind what that really meant in the original language or whether there is a more enlightened view of things reserved for the spiritually advanced Elect (as there is in Hinduism as well, for that matter) – it has for *thousands of years* been the message preached to the *people* that this is a *male* God, King over the kings of the earth, who created a *male* Adam to rule over the earthly dominion as He ruled over Adam and Adam's seed. Eve was never more than a possession, created of Adam's own flesh, the original serf.

In due time, when overrun by other empires, to sustain its culture the Jewish kingdom brought forth the legend of a *male* messiah, with that divine blood of Kings in his veins, who would come and set them free and recreate their kingdom, and indeed be their king once again. During the hardest of times a candidate arose and attracted a large revolutionary following. This candidate was promoted as a *King of Kings*, a *Lord of Lords*, and over the course of time was identified as a *royal* avatar of God incarnate, much as Krishna and Rama were in another place and time.

This human God-King might have gone unremarked throughout human history, for he left no discernible historical trace in his own country, but his followers cleverly took his story and sayings overseas to the very heart of the empire that ruled his land, where they (as a revolutionary creed, after all) proved very popular among that land's slaves and working class, the large and mostly disenfranchised hewers of wood and carriers of water that made the empire work. When Christianity first showed up in Rome, Rome had a thousand-year-old tradition of religious tolerance, one that was viewed as essential for the empire's survival.

Christianity came into Rome as a chaotic mish-mosh, carried by many people. The view that there was just one "true" version of Christianity is the result of a process of careful purging on the part of the eventual winner (Catholicism) of all the losers. To put it bluntly, the losers had their churches burned, all of their texts and "gospels" burned, and if they were particularly unlucky were burned themselves, perhaps after being extensively tortured. There were many distinct Christian heresies that showed up, where it is important to note that whatever you may have been taught by its use in context, the word "heresy" means *choice*. Some of these were variants that might well have found a way of co-existing with the similar hodge-podge of pagan faiths that represented the empire at that point, in particular the gnostic and mystic variants that didn't push the vision of hellfire and damnation inherited from the Jewish culture.

However, evolution doesn't work that way. Only the fittest survives, where (as is so often true in nature) the term "fittest" refers to the ones willing to kill and eat their competitors for breakfast. The struggle for survival occurred on many planes. Christianity, as expounded by the apostles who made their way to Rome, wasn't about coexisting, it was about *ruling*. The faith initially appealed to the relatively poor and downtrodden of Rome, and was from the outset extremely intolerant of any *heresy*. Adherents were to have no choice whatsoever, and all other existing religions *and variants of Christianity* were considered anathema.

At first the Roman empire pretty much ignored Christians, but Christians wouldn't be ignored and insisted on attacking the established Gods at every turn instead of simply moving in beside them. Since it was initially popular among the slaves and lower classes upon which Rome depended, it appeared to be a subversive and potentially revolutionary instrument, and Roman emperors took actions of one sort or another suppressing it. The worst of these, however, were none too severe and succeeded only in driving it underground for a time where only the strongest and most dogmatic variants survived.

Then they got lucky. A Roman emperor early in the fourth century issued a decree of tolerance of the Christians, who had been heavily persecuted in the third as their power and their attacks on the established order grew. The deal was that they'd come back into the fold of Rome and not make trouble or attack other religions, and that they'd then be tolerated themselves. Then along came Constantine. Initially a pagan, Constantine converted to Christianity. Since Christianity was all about *not tolerating any choice* – choice is heresy, recall – he prepared to make his faith the de facto state religion and suppress with means both violent and economic all contending choices, including the Christian ones.

By this point, two or three prime contenders for becoming "the" state religion of Christianity had emerged, and differed only in particular abstract tenets of their faith. Wars were fought and rivers of blood shed over whether Christians who recanted during the worst of the persecutions were damned. Excommunications (in both directions) abounded over whether or not Jesus was begotten (and hence appeared in time's stream as a subordinate of God the Father) or instead a trinity where Jesus was neither created nor made but existed for all time. Constantine didn't want to see any of it – he insisted that Christians get together and figure out exactly what it was that they believed, and, as long as those beliefs supported him in his office as emperor he'd then push them as the official state party line.

The result was the Council of Nicea. The majority of the council wrote down the bulk of Christian dogma as we now recognize it, excommunicated and in some cases ultimately (via Constantine) executed the losers, and burned all of their writings. Thus perished most of the Gnostic Christian texts and the Gospel of Thomas, which may well have been one of the original gospels but which did not support the system of top-down control, the picture of God the King and the divine right of kings and emperors. Constantine gave the Catholic Christians a grip on the Roman empire that persists to this day by inextricably linking the state to the church. Rivers of blood, much of it Jewish or (later) Muslim blood, were shed directly by the Church or by the secular hand of the church, the state, with its encouragement or direction. Freedom of thought was extinguished for over a thousand years.

Islam, from its birth on, fared little differently. To come into existence at all in a world dominated by the Holy Roman Empire it had to be a warrior faith from the very beginning. Its memes were basically inherited from both Judaism and Christianity, including the threat of violence in the form of eternal hellfire and damnation, including a coming apocalypse where the righteous would ultimately triumph over nonbelievers. It rejected the notion of God as a Trinity (which of course never made much sense in the first place, even to a lot of early Christians) but made God very much into King and Father combined, a being in detailed and intricate control of the threads of our lives who blesses or curses according to how correctly one lives according to the *precise* rules laid down by Mohammed.

It too, spread by converting first a small band of adherents, who in turn took over political power and started an empire of their own. It was in many cases more tolerant of other religions, in particular Christianity and Judaism (which it regarded as heresies more in the sense of misguided choice than as true blasphemy) but it did provide non-Muslim's living among the Muslim's with a constant economic pressure to convert in the form of a differential tax structure. It also controlled the courts both of law and of government, and hence was more or less unassailable internally. Only when its empire ran into other empires with their *own* state religions was it limited. Although for a time its tolerance caused a flowering of culture and science, in the end stagnation and intolerance won out, as it always does, and the Enlightenment did not arise from Islam.

It is remarkable that the early beginnings of these faiths in many ways resembled the rise of Hitler and Nazism. There were many competing variants, and acts of appalling violence between them. The strongest (most vicious) cults emerged, were driven into the shadows by prosecutions conducted by a prevailing state that wished merely to keep the peace and generally tolerated them until driven to do otherwise. They eventually succeeded by coming out of the shadows during a time of tolerance and convincing critical members of the ruling establishment to join forces, whereupon in a matter of years they *became* the state.

Once in power they were equally ruthless about destroying all opposition as quickly as they could manage it, stealing the property of their competitors (in the name of the state), killing or converting the top leadership of those competitors, destroying all trace of the competing world views by burning the books and suppressing the teachers that taught it. They all without exception bashed on the Jews, the Christians for a variety of reasons, Hitler because the Christians had set the precedent for some 1600 years.

The success of the Christians and Moslems and Hitler were all accompanied by thought control – the rewriting of all history that was inconvenient to the victor, the control of all histories that were written from that point on. In the case of the Christians, it was followed by a thousand years of darkness with only intermittant bursts of light. In the case of Islam, it was a similar mix of darkness and light. Who can doubt that the success of Hitler would have been followed by anything less?

Given this philosophical and historical similarity, is it any surprise that Hitler's rise to power was met with the approval of the Pope, at least until he demonstrated that he was not going to be any more tolerant of Catholics than anyone else? Only the united opposition of men of good will from the *protestant* world, the world created by the Enlightenment that rejected the divine right of kings, succeeded in preventing the establishment of a true world totalitarian state, one that doubtless would have elevated Hitler to the status of deity when the rewriting of history was finally done.

The image of God the King is a dark one, steeped in all the blood spilled by the greedy, warring, jealous kings of the world "in God's name". It is God seen as the being that mere men, thinking with their reptile brains, wish that they themselves could become. Ruling over all things, in absolute control, jealous of every prerogative, demanding of worship. Does this sound like an omnipotent omnipresent omniscient deity to you? To me, it sounds like the kind of worship demanded by the worst sort of human bully fighting with other bullies, the kingship of a gang leader constantly being threatened by other members of his own gang. A leadership that is in truth deeply insecure as *even in heaven* the head that wears the crown is in the JCM myth uneasy – Satan himself is the personfication of the eternal usurper, the unfaithful servant who covets the crown, the deadly *heresy* required by evolution in order that things *change*.

God the King, God that leaves us with no *choice*, is an *Evil* view of God, one that generates much evil here on Earth. Evolution and the growth of scientific knowledge is a process of *growth*, and growth involves *change*. Change in turn occurs because of choices, because of (quite literally) *heresies*. A fish's fins grow into legs, its gills become lungs, and where before there was a fish there is an amphibian, then a reptile, then a mammal, and eventually a human, all *heresies*, abominations, mutations of that which went before it but which turned out to be far *better* and more *fit to survive*.

Humans constantly choose, and constantly change, and with *freedom* of choice those choices average out for the better, not the worse. God the King is presented as a certainty, the King's law, a complete lack of choice, and hence eternal stagnation. Indeed, without the dynamics of growth and change stagnation itself is a downhill path, one leading to eventual extinction.

The people of the world would should *reject* God the King in all scripture and in their tenets of faith. They should open their minds instead of closing them. They should use their own common sense and not the words of scripture to determine what is and is not true. God may be many things, but God the King engaged in some sort of battle with the legions of Satan, a King that demands that we *not* think too hard or deeply about the truth or sense of scripture but accept it "on faith", a God that will punish us more horribly than the most demented madman could ever manage (although madmen working for the church-state in centuries past certainly gave it a try) for *failing* to accept seven silly things before breakfast – that is not a true vision of God.

Chapter 4

God the Father

By preaching of *God the Father* the religions of the world today (again predominantly the JCM religions although they by no means have a monopoly on this) propagate a vision of *patriarchal dominance.* Once again, we reap on Earth the evils thus sown: the subjugation of women, the abuse of children, the concept of *punishment* as a response to *crime* itself. This is all about a wish to control God by means of our actions on Earth. These churches without exception push a view of *ritual magic* – if we *please* God by being good Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus – the God will *reward* us. If we anger Him, God will *punish* us. The message communicated is that these rewards and punishments will come *in this life* as God wills, but of course the inevitable *random* exceptions leave an *infinity* of rewards and punishments to the eternal *afterlife.*

How can I begin to communicate the evil, the human pain, that this wickedness creates here on Earth? Perhaps a story. My sister-in-law died recently of breast cancer. She was a young woman, in her forties, with two small children. She was a well-educated woman, a psychiatrist, successful in her field. She was a basically *good* person – no doubt she "sinned" in one way or another from time to time, but no more than anybody else. She got the cancer originally, it was resected (apparently successfully) and then it came back. When it came back she slowly, inexorably, died in my very arms, in spite of the very best the excellent medical community here could do for her.

She constantly looked for a miracle. It was her true belief that if she just believed *hard* enough, and *deeply* enough, that if she repented her petty little sins *sincerely* enough, that she would get her miracle, the cancer would go into remission, and she would live to see her children grow up. She had been raised in a world where being good was rewarded, being bad was punished. Her punishment was for being bad, her salvation would come from being good. This was hard for us to deal with, and ultimately was hard on her children who had been told repeatedly that if they believed hard enough Tinkerbell wouldn't die, and who felt quite betrayed and *guilty* when, at the very, very end, they were at last told that their mother was dying and that's all there was to it.

God the Father is all about *guilt*, and I got *furiously angry* at those *wicked* people who gave my sister-in-law rituals and totems that were supposed to make her well, who then *blamed her* when they didn't work. She was obviously not believing hard enough. Perfect faith can heal, so if you fail to heal it is a *logical conclusion* that you lack perfect faith, that it is *your fault* that you are dying. Her children have had to deal with their *own* irrational sense of guilt, that if *they* had been better, done something differently, their mother would still be alive.

We wish to control God the Father by means of our obedience, but apostatic ex-Christian sinners like myself survive and even thrive as chance and the world dictate while True Believers suffer and die, with only a *promise* with *no foundation in evidence* that it will all get balanced out afterwards for comfort. Emulating this capricious and cruel God, we reward and punish our wives, our husbands, our own children, our neighbors, whenever their behavior displeases *us* or fails to agree with *our* particular vision of Law. And yes, sometimes we too do bad things to good people for no apparent reason at all.

Note well that I'm not bitching about this state of affairs. To quote my sister-in-law, the world "is what it is". Bad stuff happens, good stuff happens. Maybe there is a master plan, maybe God does indeed intervene in the affairs of the world but if so it isn't according to the *logic* of God the Father, punishing and rewarding according to the degree of one's faith or compliance with religious or civil law. It is something more subtle, something that preserves the rule of God's law (physics) and the equality and equity of the entire process, something linked, perhaps to the notion of compassion and growth, although this can seem trite in the face of the amazing pain our bodies can experience, the depths of human misery the world inflicts on us or we inflict on each other. The religions of the world need to abandon God the Father, and let go of guilt and blame. They especially need to let go of the notion that by performing religious magical rituals they are in any sense *controlling* God.

They do *not* control God by means of prayer or ritual. What a silly idea! How capricious! If anything, God, especially an omnipresent omnipotent God, controls *them*, from their first burp to their last fart. They would do well to think about this, because there is only one place that this sort of control could be accomplished, and it is the *last* place most people ever look for God – at the very center of their own beings.

I do not wish to assert that prayer has no purpose. That I cannot say. At the very least prayer can provide a sense of comfort and can give humans the strength to endure the many pains and travails of life on Earth and their own inevitable death, because prayer is a way of meditating upon and communing with the infinite and eternal, the *something* that we *know* exists because of our continuing Cartesian experience of life itself. Nothing does not exist, therefore something does, of this we can be absolutely certain, and existence even for an instant is eternal.

I would not even assert that prayer has no influence on outside events – God is a storyteller and in *one* sense this must certainly be false as God exists outside of time and our concept of "influence" is one bound to entropy and time in a way that God could truly never be. *Inside* time's stream, however, God may well be fragmented and bound to time, and telling a story of sorts that is made up as it goes along.

Maybe, perhaps, possibly are all the operative words here. We cannot be certain that prayer is a waste of time. It almost certainly is useful from a human point of view. It *may* have effects beyond that. However, we certainly cannot *control* God by prayer, beyond the prayer of an electric light switch, an antibiotic injection, or any of the myriad other inventions of mankind to improve and control the world. And even these mundane "prayers" are subject to failures as Murphy's Law (also known as the second law of thermodynamics) ensures that things that can go wrong sooner or later do go wrong.

Those prayers are not to God the Father, though. Fathers are human, and this is a metaphor at best, and not the reality. It isn't a terribly *good* metaphor, either, especially for a human species that specializes in rebelling, sooner or later, against their real father as a natural step in the process of separating and going out into the world to make one's own way. Or could it be that God is waiting, patiently, for us to do just this? Perhaps to finally achieve redemption, we have to begin by rejecting the false, and God the Father is a false and dangerous tenet.

Let me end with another little parable. I have been blessed with three sons. As anyone who has raised sons in numbers knows, it is an innate part of Sonly Nature for them to boss one another, to imitate (I suppose) me as I attempt to teach them how to go through life not pissing off everyone around you, how to pick up your own laundry, wash dishes, mow grass, and do your own share of the work necessary to support life itself. The older ones, especially, pick on the younger ones, and if I'm chewing the youngest one out because he (say) hasn't done the dishes yet and it's the third time I'm asking – a near mortal sin in our household – then it is nearly inevitable that an older brother will chime in telling the younger one even more vehemently than *I* was what his sins and shortcomings are as a human being and threatening to do him grave evil if he doesn't clean the dishes!

I have to constantly stop and shut up the older one with a "*You* are not his father, let *me* handle this..." and then return to chewing out the youngest one myself. Often to no avail.

If you think about this, does this not remind one in *so* many ways of the stance of religion on God? Are we not always in the position of the youngest brother, being told by people that are in some sense our *equals* what to do, often so loudly that it drowns out any message we might be getting outside of that? Do we not tolerate it until one day we are old enough ourselves to go out into the world and make our own choices, stilling at last the voices of father and brother, until all too soon we find ourselves stuck with *being* the father and *having* to enforce some sort of law and order on a set of urchins who are, whatever you might otherwise believe, born as perfect anarchists without a smidgen of moral sense?

As a human myth, it is necessary but is also generally resented to be ruled by your parents, for at least a time. It is forever bitter medicine to be schooled by your brothers or sisters – they are your *equals* and have no more of a line on the One Truth than you do or anybody else does, for all that you will sometimes listen to your parents because experience has taught you that not to leads to pains other than just being punished. Sometimes ignoring your parents causes you to really get hurt, but your brothers (you also learn) are as likely to get you *into* trouble as out of it, and their attempts at control rankle like nothing else.

Let us reject God the Father, as an abstraction of human experience playing out the evolution game and go on to ask: Are we our brother's keeper? If so, should we let him out of the loony bin for occasional weekends at home? Or should we *not* permit ourselves to go through life being babysat and commanded by (or commanding!) our brothers and sisters, older or younger, and be, instead, just the boss of ourselves.

Chapter 5

God the Brother

By preaching of *God the Brother*, the religions of the world create a vision of God that has all of our frailties and weaknesses, an *imperfect* God. Such a God initially attracts us as He is less intimidating than God the King or God the Father (both of whom we actively *fear* to a greater or lesser degree, just as we fear our rulers and fear our parents, however much we might also love them). This is a God bound to time, a God with a beginning. Of course this makes no sense and was rejected as the Arian heresy in Christianity back in the early 300's, although it took another century or two to go away altogether. Not all religions have a view of God who is just one of us, and Christianity is at best a partial exception. Surprising, given that many religions *do* portray God on Earth as an *avatar* of the Godhead. Mortal or immortal, with beginnings or eternal, Gods are often bound to time *for* a time in human form in religion and myth.

However, the view of God as another human, as our *brother* or *sister* then comes to *repel* us as we (as humans) come to disagree with one or more of our brother's supposed pronouncements in scripture, especially those dealing with hellfire and damnation, with rule and obedience. My youngest *hates it* when his older brother's tell him what to do. From me he will tolerate it, (less and less, of course, as he approaches dread adolescence and dissociation and rebellion against me as well). From them he rejects it utterly. So they, too, threaten him with all sorts of infinite and eternal pains, and sometimes go so far as to try to administer one (forcing me, sigh, to administer an even bigger one from On High-er).

God the brother in Christianity, in at least some scriptures, could have been one of my sons, trying to get his brothers to do exactly what he wants. The quotes a couple of chapters back are from the *New* Testament, note well, from the synoptic Gospels themselves. God may have died on the cross as our Brother, but ultimately he is the son of his father and our emperor and will come to smite the wicked and cast them into a lake of fire. Turn the other cheek *not* because of the virtue of meekness, not because of the wisdom of charity, but because you can afford to smile – the one who smites you will be *burned alive for eternity* and all you have to do is endure a few seconds of Earthly pain. Haven't we heard all this before from our brothers?

Mom and Dad left me in charge, you have to do as I say. They *said* I could hit you if you don't. I'm *gonna* hit you if you don't. I'm going to hit you.

God the Brother is thus a dubious object from the beginning. If you hit me I'll hit you *back* is all that those rules make you want to say, but God the Brother is a *big* brother, and being *hit* can last for eternity. How many times have I come home and found the youngest one crying because his older brother hit him because he "wouldn't help out in the kitchen"? And yet, God the Brother is one form of God that perhaps we can *love*, just as my sons all, truly, love one another.

God our Brother is a form of ourselves. God bound to time is subject to temptation, to pleasure, to pain. Perhaps he has sex, certainly he eats and enjoys good food and wine, the pleasure of a sunny crisp day, the delight of a small child's hand thrust trustingly into his own as an uncle, if not a father. How then can our Brother end up casting us into a fiery pit? How can those poor unbaptized children get cast there along with us? And yet, if he doesn't do this, if in fact he really is *just like us*, then can we not aspire to be *just like him*? Are we not, in fact, *all* the children of God, representative of Godhead on Earth in equal measure, and in some sense beyond sin?

Don't we *all* get to grow up and one day be on our own, to continue the human anthropomorphic metaphor, however silly it might truly be?

Here it is hard to say. God our Brother was cut out of the early Christian church like a tumor, and replaced by the bizarre notion of a Trinity. Jesus is at once the Son of the Father, the Father Himself incarnate, and the Eternal King. Any attempt to view him as ourselves *however much he suffered on the cross like so many of us have suffered* is prohibited by religious tenet – he is *God*, we are just sinful humans. No matter *how* good we are, no matter *how* we try, we *cannot* be perfect like he was and if we were it wouldn't matter, he is God and we're not.

Again, how *much* this sounds like the silly patriarchal bullshit from the Bible, filled with favored sons, bloodlines, and sons good, bad, and ugly fighting like my own sons fight but with real swords and for kingdoms and Earthly rewards. Christ may be many things, but our Brother he is not permitted to be because *we are the equals of our brothers* and are always subjugated to Christ the King and transmortal Father within.

God our Brother exists, perhaps, in other religions. Buddha never ever asserted that he was a God (at least, no more so than everybody else, which is not to say that he *wasn't* God but if he was, so are you and I). Truthfully, if he'd been asked by a follower if he *was* a God, he probably would have laughed out loud and then given some sort of perfectly parabolic answer that worked out to "who knows?" (which is, after all, the perfect truth and no God bound to time could say it better).

Krishna and Rama had brothers indeed, but in Hinduism they get to be Gods too, just not avatars of the Mahavishnu. In the deepest understanding of Hinduism they are indeed brothers, and are even brothers of you and me, and we too can awake to find the Atman within, but there tends to be a bit of that same they are Gods and we are mere men thing that distances them from and elevates them over most of humanity

He might have existed for a few hundred years in Christianity as the Gnostic Jesus (not the Christ, mind you), the Jesus of Thomas. Alas, the Jesus that spoke of enlightenment like he *was* the Buddha, the Jesus that spoke in riddles designed to make you *think for yourself* instead of be frightened of hellfire and damnation if you dare to, the Zen Jesus was not sufficiently revolutionary or violent to win in the game of high-stakes sociomemetic co-evolution that ultimately joined Constantine to the Catholic church with a mandate to purge it.

They were right to reject it, of course, from the evolutionary point of view. It was totally unsuitable as a court-mandated religion of Emperors. Still, a small echo of God our Brother survives in Christianity in the form of the more humble and human of the Saints, perhaps in its portrayal of Mary. Similarly so some of the Bhoddisatvas or *rishis* or *sufis* speak as our brothers of a vision of God that they have attained that is not our father or our king, but merely Light.

Yet Jesus *is* our brother – man born of woman – and the entire structure of the church is one big complex establishment for telling us what to do with threat of hell itself if we fail. We are bullied precisely as my youngest son is bullied by his older brothers, forced to do as they say even when it makes no sense or we'd rather not, even with in conflicts with what we think the Father *really* said because we heard it a bit differently from the way they did.

The church of Jesus our brother never completely loses the love. If there is a single redeeming feature that in all justice must be given to it in this polemic it is that while the *official* governance of the church and all of its protestant and more esoteric offshoots has been militant and political and self-serving and selfish – behaving like the worst of men, the vilest of dictators as often as not – the *people* of the church *are*, in the end, just us. There really are saints, if you want to call a good person a saint, both in the church and out. And as one might expect, they are usually the ones that *least* want to tell you what to do, that are the *slowest* to judge, that do *not* threaten you with a beating if you fail to wash the dishes but instead roll up their own sleeves and start washing, making the very act of the sacrifice fun enough that we sometimes find ourselves rolling up our own sleeves and helping out, because, well, the dishes are *dirty* and they won't clean themselves...

We reap the consequences of this vision in our own treatment of our brothers and sisters on this earth, as we act in self-righteousness to rule or punish them "for their own good", as we judge humanity not from the point of view of brotherly or sisterly compassion, a relationship between loving equals, but as members of a *hierarchy*, one where status and power are achieved by *compliance* with the rules of the brotherhood, as we strive towards a "first among equals" position of control and power.

In the end, it is even less savory to be ruled or punished by a brother, our equal, than it is by a parent or a king, where at least we understand clearly the social ranking implicit in the metaphor. Our brother should know better the human condition and how we are more often the moved than the mover, where even our gravest sins often as not have their roots in things that are not completely within our ability to control. Our brother should know about mental illness, about the lifelong consequences of child abuse, about the unintentional consequences of the "sin" of water filled with lead and estrogens peed into the lakes and rivers on developing fetuses.

We have far less free will than we'd like to think, and if the religions of the world wanted to do us all a favor, they'd work on altering the metaphor of God our Brother to help people *develop their free will*, freed from the baggage of the accidents of their life and birth. They might use this image to *teach people to use their heads and their hearts and compassion to guide their actions*, not follow a set of forcibly memorized rules out of a sense of guilt, or fear, or a wish to control the uncontrollable. Sometimes the right action is just that – the right action, and we can choose it *without* being browbeaten. Finally, perhaps they might try to throw out altogether the image of God the Brother who would *rule* us and *judge* us, and go back to the Gnostic, the Buddhist, the Deist vision of a God who does not sit in dominion or judgement but rather is an active participant who is equally bound to the rules of the game, where one has the element of *choice* (heresy or not) unconstrained by any particular scripture.

Chapter 6

God the Holy Spirit

At last we get to the meat of the matter. Human metaphors for God, as we have seen, inevitably fail. Perhaps, if you like, they are too "sinful" from having been translated as projective *metaphors* from our human understanding onto something that requires mathematics and deep meditation to understand in even a small part. The mathematics is that of the infinite, that which we might imagine is a Cosmos in which our experience of space-time is but the tiniest of imbeddings.

This is projection *the other way.* Rather than imagining God seen through the filter of being a sort of demented or extended super-human, let us view all of creation as being a projection of God from a (why not?) infinite dimensional space to the space and time we exist in. To even *begin* to envision God, we have to think of ourselves as perhaps being the metaphorical two-dimensional creatures in the lovely book *Flatland* as they discover the Third Dimension. There are limits on what we can see of it, but no limits on our ability to imagine it with mathematics. And we have to accept the fact that our vision will *always* be finite, and we will *never* perceive the whole without becoming the whole – the mathematics of information theory more or less guarantees it.

This is *God the Holy Spirit*, and is a true mystery. Understanding God as Spirit is religion's purpose (if it has a purpose) on Earth, where I'm going to be quite vague about just what a "spirit" is. Well, no I'm not. It is Self. However, you probably won't understand what that means, because observing it is like trying to catch your own shadow or grasp your own reflection. It flits away as you reach for it, yet it is always right there at hand.

The truly *enlightened* figures of every faith (and all faiths have had individuals who were so enlightened) have had a relatively clear and uniform vision of the Holy Spirit. You will find the Holy Spirit clearly described in the Upanishads of Hinduism, in some of the recorded words of Christ, in the poetry of the Torah and Old Testament, in the better parts of the Koran. Mystics of all faiths see the same Light, and do not seek to name it or constrain it or rule it by ritual and magic, but rather to open themselves to it and discover it within themselves. It is the *Dharma* that exists outside of all religious teachings (which after all, are bound to time and have a start and one day will have an end).

Humans have a tremendous difficulty grasping this vision of God, because it is utterly inhuman. It has no body, for a body is other, and it is One. It has no place, no time (or if you like it is in all places, all times). It is in once sense changeless, even as it embraces all that changes. It would be easy to reject it as a silly concept, as in one sense there is and can never be any *external* evidence for its existence, except that it is at the core of our *internal* experience of *everything* – it is the one thing that differentiates our existence from the dark eternity of nonexistence. It is that which watches the watcher, watching the world, in the self-aware core of our being. It is that which is the *difference* between our bodies and minds as pure biomachines as mechanical in their own way as the markings on a DVD that encode a movie *about* love and passion and sex and greed, and the *experience* of love and passion and sex and greed.

It is, as I said, Self[1]

Alas, in many if not most cases these visionaries fail to communicate it this vision effectively as it is rather difficult to put into words – *as* the difference between experience of meaning and the encoding of the meaning in symbols, it is almost an oxymoron to *try* to encode it in symbols as I am doing here. Some entire religious traditions, e.g. that of Zen Buddhism, argue that it is foolish and counterproductive to even try.

I disagree, of course, or I wouldn't be trying. One point of trying is one can cut away many of the things that do *not* look like an elephant, think of many things that are *not* the word "rhinoceros" (if those two metaphors are familiar to you), by plain exposition as I did above with my whacking at anthropomorphic, scripture based visions of God laced with evil and wickedness inherited from the anthropic projection of utterly discredited human institutions onto the *higher* dimensional Godhead. Cut away a bit of the distracting cruft of old religions, and it might make it *easier* for many to arrive at the correct existential crisis and discover themselves at the heart of it.

Also, in the past one can see that in many cases the attempts failed to propagate because the original words of said Saints and *rishis* were not originally recordedl. They were merely *remembered* and rewritten, decades or centuries later, in human metaphorical terms by ordinary humans who often missed the point altogether or who were trying to seduce a King and

[1]There is a lovely little pamphlet I came upon by random chance called *The Impersonal Self* that might as well have been written by Buddha. And was, I am sure, written by *a* Buddha. It is a nominally at least a Christian work. Check it out.

ended up being seduced themselves into corrupting a pure truth.

To see just one tiny bit of this corruption, note the following passage in the text of the Gospel of Thomas, discovered in near original form in the desert in 1945 and thought by many to date back to within decades of the death of Jesus. This is one of the texts *rejected* by the Council of Nicea as part of the deal to make Christianity the official state religion of an empire. It cuts *straight to the heart of the matter* and supports all of the general conclusions above in *Jesus's own words*:

> Jesus said, "Whoever blasphemes against the Father will be forgiven, and whoever blasphemes against the Son will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either on earth or in heaven."

What a phrase, redolent of the many paradoxes inherent in the Christian church. God the Father is thus a false vision. How could it be otherwise, if to blaspheme against it is forgivable? God the *Son* is, too, a false vision. Jesus is aware that he is, after all, as human as you and I and must fear death and pain while bound to mortal flesh. Jesus is apparently *honest* about this. Once again, how could it be forgivable to blaspheme against the Son if he were a true vision of God? Jesus is rejecting here the Deity of the anthropomorphic God-King-Father, and his *own* Deity as well. Even if I'm completely wrong in this *entire polemic* and Jesus *was* the Son of God (whatever that means) I can be forgiven that, as long as I remain true to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, I suspect and Thomas openly states, is letting us in on the deepest secrets of the faith. That is that these secrets are *not* absolute truth. They may well be helpful *metaphors* to guide people to lead better lives than they might otherwise have led, but they are not, in fact, true or inevitable visions of God and certainly aren't commandments backed by threats, God as Our Brother the Bully, speaking with God the Father's tongue. Thomas's Jesus wants us to think, to listen, but doesn't want to *compel* our attention. This is a Jesus that maybe, just maybe, I could talk to, as long as he listens to *me* as much as I listen to him, because I've figured a bit of this all out too and maybe he could learn as well as teach.

Ultimately, the only possible interpretation I can make of this saying of Jesus (if indeed it is such, but it is actually *more reliable as a near-original historical source* than *any of the other books of the New Testament*, not less) as saying that God the Holy Spirit is the one *true* vision, the one the brings enlightenment.

Even so Thomas, in writing the words of Jesus as best he remembers them (or not), distorts the Holy Spirit as echoed by Jesus by inserting God the King, the Father, and the Brother combined to give the words authority. Jesus *is* the Son to Thomas. He speaks *for* the Father. And clearly, the Jesus of Thomas is no Bhoddisatva, no true brother, for does he not say that one will not be *forgiven* (by whom, one is forced to ask, as he avoids stating that *he* will not forgive him) if we fail to understand, fail to obey, fail to be vassals before the Holy Lord, and somehow "blaspheme" against the Holy Spirit? He holds out the choice, the *heresy*, but wraps it up in a threat even so.

Yet this is puzzling. How can one blaspheme against this particular vision of God? There is remarkably little scripture on it, in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran. Most of what there is is either oblique (e.g. the references in the New Testament) or blatantly incorrect (e.g. the references in Genesis, the one book in the Bible that is absolutely refuted almost in its entirety by scientific evidence and reasoning, leaving us either Manichaeans or rejecting the whole ball of wax that is religion).

Perhaps this is all to the good. Perhaps we all share an *intuitive* concept of the Holy Spirit as the one basis for *all* religion. It is God the Abstraction, God that is Love, God that is Light, God the Atman, God the Everything. It is eternal, uncaring, pure – infinitely compassionate, infinitely knowing, beyond our metaphorical comprehension. As such, we can no more blaspheme against it with mere words or deeds than the Part can blaspheme the Whole, the Effect can blaspheme the Cause, the Atman can blaspheme against its Self.

Perhaps in an oblique way, and not at all the way Thomas doubtless intended with the ominous tone, we can take comfort from this quote of Jesus. All of us, no matter what our "sins" and "blasphemies" and above all our "heresies" – our choices – will ultimately be forgiven for we *cannot* blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, the one true vision of God.

It is what we *are*.

Appendix A

License Terms for "God the King...,"

A.1 General Terms

License is granted to copy or use this document according to the Open Public License (OPL, enclosed below), which is a Public License, developed by the GNU Foundation, which applies to "open source" generic documents.

In addition there are three modifications to the OPL:

Distribution of substantively modified versions of this document is prohibited without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. (This is to prevent errors from being introduced which would reflect badly on the author's professional abilities.)

Distribution of the work or derivative of the work in any standard (paper) book form is prohibited unless prior permission is obtained from the copyright holder. (This is so that the author can make at least some money if this work is republished as a textbook or set of notes and sold commercially for – somebody's – profit. The author doesn't care about copies photocopied or locally printed and distributed free or at cost to students to support a course, except as far as the next clause is concerned.)

The "Beverage" modification listed below applies to all non-Duke usage of these notes in any form (online or in a paper publication). Note that this modification is probably not legally defensible and can be followed really pretty much according to the honor rule.

As to my personal preferences in beverages, red wine is great, beer is delightful, and Coca Cola or coffee or tea or even milk acceptable to those who for religious or personal reasons wish to avoid stressing my liver.

Students at Duke, whether in my class or not, of course, are automatically exempt from the beverage modification. It can be presumed that the fraction of their tuition that goes to pay my salary counts for any number of beverages.

A.2 The "Beverage" Modification to the OPL

Any user of this OPL-copyrighted material shall, upon meeting the primary author(s) of this OPL-copyrighted material for the first time under the appropriate circumstances, offer to buy him or her or them a beverage. This beverage may or may not be alcoholic, depending on the personal ethical and moral views of the offerer(s) and receiver(s). The beverage cost need not exceed one U.S. dollar (although it certainly may at the whim of the offerer:-) and may be accepted or declined with no further obligation on the part of the offerer. It is not necessary to repeat the offer after the first meeting, but it can't hurt...

A.3 OPEN PUBLICATION LICENSE Draft v0.4, 8 June 1999

I. REQUIREMENTS ON BOTH UNMODIFIED AND MODIFIED VERSIONS

The Open Publication works may be reproduced and distributed in whole or in part, in any medium physical or electronic, provided that the terms of this license are adhered to, and that this license or an incorporation of it by reference (with any options elected by the author(s) and/or publisher) is displayed in the reproduction.

Proper form for an incorporation by reference is as follows:

Copyright (c) <year> by <author's name or designee>. This material may be distributed only subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the Open Publication License, vX.Y or later (the latest version is presently available at http://www.opencontent.org/openpub/).

The reference must be immediately followed with any options elected by the author(s) and/or publisher of the document (see section VI).

Commercial redistribution of Open Publication-licensed material is permitted.

Any publication in standard (paper) book form shall require the citation of the original publisher and author. The publisher and author's names shall appear on all outer surfaces of the book. On all outer surfaces of the book the original publisher's name shall be as large as the title of the work and cited as possessive with respect to the title.

II. COPYRIGHT

The copyright to each Open Publication is owned by its author(s) or designee.

III. SCOPE OF LICENSE

The following license terms apply to all Open Publication works, unless otherwise explicitly stated in the document.

Mere aggregation of Open Publication works or a portion of an Open Publication work with other works or programs on the same media shall not cause this license to apply to those other works. The aggregate work shall contain a notice specifying the inclusion of the Open Publication material and appropriate copyright notice.

SEVERABILITY. If any part of this license is found to be unenforceable in any jurisdiction, the remaining portions of the license remain in force.

NO WARRANTY. Open Publication works are licensed and provided "as is" without warranty of any kind, express or implied, including, but not limited to, the implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose or a warranty of non-infringement.

IV. REQUIREMENTS ON MODIFIED WORKS

All modified versions of documents covered by this license, including translations, anthologies, compilations and partial documents, must meet the following requirements:

1. The modified version must be labeled as such.
2. The person making the modifications must be identified and the modifications dated.
3. Acknowledgement of the original author and publisher if applicable must be retained according to normal academic citation practices.
4. The location of the original unmodified document must be identified.
5. The original author's (or authors') name(s) may not be used to assert or imply endorsement of the resulting document without the original author's (or authors') permission.

V. GOOD-PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the requirements of this license, it is requested from and strongly recommended of redistributors that:

1. If you are distributing Open Publication works on hardcopy or CD-ROM, you provide email notification to the authors of your intent

to redistribute at least thirty days before your manuscript or media freeze, to give the authors time to provide updated documents. This notification should describe modifications, if any, made to the document.

2. All substantive modifications (including deletions) be either clearly marked up in the document or else described in an attachment to the document.

Finally, while it is not mandatory under this license, it is considered good form to offer a free copy of any hardcopy and CD-ROM expression of an Open Publication-licensed work to its author(s).

VI. LICENSE OPTIONS

The author(s) and/or publisher of an Open Publication-licensed document may elect certain options by appending language to the reference to or copy of the license. These options are considered part of the license instance and must be included with the license (or its incorporation by reference) in derived works.

A. To prohibit distribution of substantively modified versions without the explicit permission of the author(s). "Substantive modification" is defined as a change to the semantic content of the document, and excludes mere changes in format or typographical corrections.

To accomplish this, add the phrase 'Distribution of substantively modified versions of this document is prohibited without the explicit permission of the copyright holder.' to the license reference or copy.

B. To prohibit any publication of this work or derivative works in whole or in part in standard (paper) book form for commercial purposes is prohibited unless prior permission is obtained from the copyright holder.

To accomplish this, add the phrase 'Distribution of the work or derivative of the work in any standard (paper) book form is prohibited unless prior permission is obtained from the copyright holder.' to the license reference or copy.

OPEN PUBLICATION POLICY APPENDIX:

(This is not considered part of the license.)

Open Publication works are available in source format via the Open Publication home page at http://works.opencontent.org/.

Open Publication authors who want to include their own license on Open Publication works may do so, as long as their terms are not more restrictive than the Open Publication license.

If you have questions about the Open Publication License, please contact TBD, and/or the Open Publication Authors' List at opal@opencontent.org, via email.