

By way of introduction...

For years I avoided a critical reading or judgment of the Bible and Christian theology. Which is not to say I avoided the subject. Indeed, I read everything from the Bible to Augustine to Otto. I withheld critical commentary out of peer pressure; my parents are deeply religious. In religious conversation I hid behind the critical authors I read, always representing their views in the third person, and never letting on that they represented my own views. Recently I was given Thomas Merton's *Mystics and Zen Masters*, a text to help me understand Christian mysticism and humanism. Merton was a gifted writer and scholar, and through his writing I did indeed come to better understand Christian morality.

The Morality of Christ

Part 1: The Poverty of Christian Humanism

Thomas Merton was a Christian monk who lived and wrote in the early to mid-1900s. A Catholic author of noteworthy influence, he had a gift for analytical writing. While Merton lived from 1915 to 1968 he participated in talks with the Dalai Lama and traveled the world, paying particular attention to the Far East where he studied Zen and Buddhist mysticism.

I admire the breadth of Merton's reading and am somewhat envious of his travel record. I am not, however, impressed by his anti-human and woman-hating philosophies, drawn and inspired by his Christian background.

It is to his credit that he had the intellectual courage to draw the necessary conclusions demanded by Christian thought. Merton, for all his faults, is no coward, nor is he one who distorts his views or the views of others. He shares something with Rudolf Otto, who realized the moral of the story of Job is not that God will reward faith, but that God cannot be described as loving by human standards.

It is sad, though perhaps no fault of Merton's, that his intellectual and literary gifts were perverted by the hateful influence of Christianity. I am sensitive to the fact that Thomas Merton is a man of his time, and it would not be appropriate to judge him by the standards of today. After all, Jefferson owned slaves, and Lincoln himself wrote "I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races." I recognize that sound historical analysis demands that we treat individuals and their views in the context of their own *zeitgeist*.

Morality and ethics shift, as the civil rights movement so ably illustrates. In his own time, Merton's sympathy for communist philosophy and his disregard for the social equality of women would be unremarkable. It is, however, telling that in defending his most bigoted statements Merton relies not upon contemporary thought, but on ancient Christian texts.

We may excuse as symptoms of his time some of Merton's views, we cannot, however, extend the same excuse to Christian theology and philosophy. Although it too is a product of its time--bronze age barbarism and bigoted superstition--it has self reflectively maintained its nature, enshrined in a holy book purported to be the inspired word of God.

We shall take Merton and his religion at their best, and grant they believe what they say. Merton had the courage to accept what his God told him, and we can find no fault with Merton's accuracy or diligence when he describes the fundamental element of Christian humanism and theology.

Merton devotes a chapter of his text, *Mystics and Zen Masters*, to Christian humanism. He is quick and concise in describing Christian humanism as defined by a millennia of celebrated scholars, monks, official Saints, and of course the Bible. He details that the fundamental base on which the humanism of Christian theology rests is the concept of the virgin. Merton explains that,

The virgin is what a redeemed human person really ought to be. Hence, a twofold reason why she should not use cosmetics: on the one hand, if she paints her face she transforms it into a lie, making it other than God wanted it to be. This is of course a trope even in secular satire. But the meaning here is deeper. She in a certain sense yields up the freedom of the children of God and returns to what St. Paul would call captivity under the "elements of this world" (Gal. 4:3) since she implicitly wants to be desired with an erotic love. (114-115)

Make-up is a sin against God, and a virgin is what all human persons really ought to be! But that's just the beginning of the grotesque, sexist, anti-human beliefs that are "the full flowering of the theology of the Incarnation" (114).

"But," Merton informs us,

the realm of *eros* is also the realm of death. The house of Hymen and of pleasure is also, unfortunately, the house of cruel pain. The wife in the ancient world was more or less the husband's property, a thing rather than a person, and she was not always treated with gentleness or consideration. (115)

First, note that Merton views the act of erotic sexual intercourse as cruel pain. He has my sympathies. Second, it is grimly ironic that Merton refers to "the ancient world" where women were "the husband's property." It is almost as if he intends to imply that a theology based on a 2,000 year old bronze-age story is separate from "the ancient world." Or, more ominously, maybe he does not intend to divorce Christian marriage from the ancient world at all.

Let us examine Merton's Bible, the source of his Christian humanism. I direct you to I Corinthians 11:3 and 11:8-9. The verses describe how man unto woman is as God unto man. I should have no need to point out the numerous verses and parables where it is made quite clear that man is an object, the property, the creation of God, surviving on His sufferance. Perhaps, at least, I shall mention Job.

But in case the Bible's opinion on women as property isn't clear enough, we can turn to another verse,

Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (I Tim 2:11-14)

But wait, there's more! Ephesians states,

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. (Eph 5:22-24)

Wow! The Bible says women are to submit to their own husbands in everything! That's an absolute. I guess that means it must be okay for Christian men to force their wives to get raped to death, right? Let's check the Bible, see what it has to say on that exact subject. Oh, you didn't know the Bible covered a man's right to have his woman gang raped? It's true, it does. Perhaps it is not so ironic that in my experience, those who have most read the Bible are those who are most disgusted by religion.

Turn to Judges 19:24, where a good servant of God, along with his wife (really his concubine, which at the time was like a wife with none of the fidelity restrictions but all of the property-status, hurrah polygamy!), visits a city of infidels. The good servant is given shelter by another follower of the one true God, but when night falls a band of infidels attack! They tell the owner of the house to send out the male stranger, that they may rape him.

The owner of the house, however, will not stand for this. He is a man of God, a follower of the one true Lord of all, and he has the strength and moral courage granted by his faith to stand against such a disgusting demand. Indeed, with great moral fortitude, the owner of the house says,

Behold, here is my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing. (Jdg 19:24)

Yeah! You tell them, brother! They aren't going to do no such vile thing as gang rape to your male guest, but they can *humble your daughter* and rape her until the sun comes up. You're so generous, you'll throw in your guest's wife with the bargain. Do unto others, eh?

But alas, the heathens making the demands were not as civilized as the man of the Good Book, and they refused his generous offer. It appears the oppressed followers of the Lord were at an impasse. But wait! The male guest under threat of rape has a wife. And we know that the wife must submit to the husband to do "everything" he says. Let's see the next verse:

But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go. (Jdg 19:25)

So the infidels refused to rape the man's virgin daughter (hey, even infidels have standards), and then *without being asked* to the husband ordered his wife to do the duty of gang rape service. It's a good thing he had both a wife *and* a God who commanded her to submit to her husband, otherwise he could have been in for a rough night. How rough? Well, let's see the next verse:

Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord was, till it was light. (Jdg 19:26)

Note that 'lord' here doesn't refer to God, but to her husband. So the wife was raped until dawn, at which point she collapsed on the doorstep. You might think that the husband would have waited up all night waiting for his wife's safe return. You would be wrong, though. This is a man

of the one true Lord, after all, and like Merton he understood woman's proper place. He slept soundly, by all appearances, and after it was full light he, well, let's just see the text:

And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold. (Jdg 19:27)

Ah, he found his wife. He appears to have almost forgotten about her, as he was "out to go his way." Continuing,

And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place. (Jdg 19:28)

Up, woman! Oh, what's that? Can't answer? Well, I'll just put you on our donkey...

And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. (Jdg 19:29)

Oh, she was silent because she was dead. She was raped to death. Otherwise she was alive for the dismemberment.

But the story continues! The very next verse is interesting, and a key to the whole context of this sordid affair.

And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds. (Jdg 19:30)

Ah yes, this story is being narrated by the husband to an audience of his fellow Israelites, the chosen people of the one true Lord. It seems from the context that this whole story is being viewed as a tragedy, a real crime. "There was no such deed done nor seen" and all that.

The story continues onto Judges 20 as the murderous husband's friends speak their minds. It may or may not surprise you to learn that the gang rape was a cause of tragedy, and judged to be a crime. But not in the way you or I or any modern human with the slightest sense of decency might judge. No, the horrible crime was not that a husband volunteered his wife to be gang raped to save his own skin, nor that the husband then mutilated and desecrated her corpse. No, these actions were accepted and praised for sound judgment. You can practically see the high-fives.

The crime was that the infidels had used the wife too hard, and killed her. This constituted a loss of property¹ and so a genocide was hastily decided upon. A policy decision--kill all the people in the neighboring village!--was immediately accepted as an appropriate course of action. This ex-husband's fellow men had to defend his honor.

They ethnically cleanse the *entire city* where the rapists lived. It's all in the Bible.

¹ Recall that the 10th commandment does *not* say "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." That is the politically-correct, bowdlerized version. Open a Bible and check out Exodus 20:17, King James Version. The 10th commandment says "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's *property*," of which "wife" is merely one item in a rather long list, and not even the first item at that.

For my own part, I rank it as a worse and more evil thing to volunteer one's wife for gang-rape, subsequently defile her corpse, and then use the crime to which one was a party to instigate a genocide. But, oddly enough, the Bible's moral judgment is the exact opposite of mine.

It is not too much a stretch to imagine that Paul justified his disgusting claim that a wife must submit to "everything" from her husband because he read, and understood, the above story. Okay, but that was an Old Testament story, and then just Paul restating it. Paul was kind of a jerk, and not really Jesus Christ. Maybe Christ has a better track record with women.

Let's see, ah yes, Jesus will personally murder the children of a woman who gives birth out of wed-lock. That'll show her to have the proper ceremonies performed! (Rev. 2:22-23). If we accept, as Christianity insists we must, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and that he is fully God, then this following quote can be rightly attributed to Him:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Gen 3:16)

That's God talking, presumably before he split off into Christ. This is pre-Trinity oppression, but I'll be generous and grant that it could well have been Christ himself who made woman the slave of man, and who deliberately and coldly "multiplied" her sorrows.

Let us return now to Merton. He was discussing how, "The virgin was by her consecration liberated by Christ from the tyranny of a pagan or half-converted husband" (115). Very good, Merton. I'm convinced. Although I do hope he won't mind if at this point I call him a raving madman.

But we're not quite done with this anti-humanist monk. His writing is like a train wreck, impossible to not watch. I admit it could be worse. It could be like a biblical gang rape.

"It must not be forgotten," continues Merton, "that the Fathers also saw in virginity the return to the paradisiacal perfection of man's beginning, the recovery of the innocence, the purity, and the familiarity with God for which man was originally created" (115). This doesn't sound too awful. A little saccharine, like a bad Disney knock-off, but alright.

According to Merton,

St. Ambrose says that 'in the sacred virgins we see on earth that angelic life which we once lost in Paradise.' St. Jerome adds that if married life is appropriate to man after the fall, the virginal life is characteristic of Paradise. In a word, virginity is man's 'normal' state, a state of personal and spiritual freedom above the vicissitudes of terrestrial existence, which is always lived in the shadow of death in which sex provides a means of survival, not for the person, but only for human nature. (116)

Wow! We swung right off the deep end there. According to Merton, the "Christian humanism that is the full flowering of the theology of the Incarnation" views sex as a shadow of death, set in direct opposition to personal and spiritual freedom, and of no noteworthy value to the person, but only to human nature (which we assume is 'terrestrial' and dirty). That's quite a claim, but it's awfully negative. Give me something positive, Merton!

Christian virginity is therefore the highest affirmation of human values and aspirations, for it is the liberation and fulfillment of the human person in union with God in Christ. (117)

There we are! A highest affirmation of human values--that's very positive. And to achieve the highest affirmation of human values one only need be a virgin (and a Christian!). I had never considered that the highest thing to which a human can aspire is to be a virgin. We should bring this good news to China; might help with the population problem.

For my own part, my infidel atheist mind would have pegged something like mercy or compassion or empathy or helping others as being the highest affirmation of human values. I might even say that *having sexual intercourse* is easily capable of being a high affirmation of human values and aspirations, though perhaps not the highest.

But Merton has anticipated my objection. "If we look closely," he says, "we see that it is always the corrupt pagan society in which human love and honor tend to be debased." (117)

Oh, I see. It's the infidel societies that debase human love, not the Christian society whose most holy and important work, the inspired word of God, prescribes gang-rape as a suitable means for conflict resolution.

The Greatest Immorality is Within the New Testament

I want to say a little more about Merton, because he touches on what I take to be the greatest immorality of Christianity: original sin. This is the ugly concept that the child ought to be punished for the crimes of the father. It has been soundly rejected as barbaric cruelty by every civilized society and philosopher, with the notable exception of Christianity. Today, one could not find a man or woman who would even consider agreeing to convict Hitler's unborn grandchildren of crimes against humanity.

No, no one accepts the concept of original sin, or of sin passing down bloodlines. No one, that is, except Jesus Christ and every Christian you could care to name. Exodus describes the all-loving God as saying that the sins of the fathers will be visited on their children "even unto the third and fourth generation."

Lest we forget, the reason for Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, and our subsequent need to accept him as our savior, is based on the concept of inherited sin. Our sin is original, for something Adam did millennia ago. Because of a failure on Adam's part, thousands of years before we were born, we have been sentenced to death everlasting.

The crucifix which Christians proudly display is a symbol of our redemption--redemption from an inherited sin. This is a grossly immoral concept. Inherited sin is a blight on all that is good, and those who promote it should be deeply ashamed.

Merton adroitly combines this anti-human sentiment with woman-hating sexism by self-ingratiatingly saying,

St. Ambrose vehemently exonerates Eve of full responsibility in the fall of man: she was deceived by a superior being, and man, deceived by her, his inferior, is therefore without excuse! With Eve, original sin was error: with Adam, it was sin, and Adam's fault exculpates Eve from all guilt, since he is the more responsible. (118)

This is condescending bullshit to the highest degree. Eve is inferior to Adam? And since when do two wrongs make a right? Just because X makes a bigger mistake doesn't absolve Y of any guilt, at least not under any system of morality or ethics a sane human would recognize. But Merton, nothing if not thorough, gleefully adds:

Not only that, but the penalty of childbearing in suffering is for the good of Eve and it washes away, in salutary penance, the sin of Adam. (118)

That's a sweet deal, Merton. Women get punished with great pain in childbirth, and that pain absolves men! Cool! But maybe I am misinterpreting Merton. He was an avid reader. A great synthesizer of thought, and he references a lot of other authors in his text. He doesn't always quote people with whom he personally agrees. If only there was a way to tell for certain, oh! Here it is, Merton's commentary on St. Ambrose's words,

This totally refreshing defense of woman gives us some indication of the depth and reality of patristic humanism. (119)

That settles that, then. Merton is absolutely right, though, this 'defense of woman' reveals to us exactly the depth and reality of Christian humanism. And the wife in the ancient world was indeed a thing rather than a person, and she was not always treated with gentleness or consideration--a tradition that is fully outlined, realized, and defended in the bronze-age barbaric book upon which 'modern' Christianity is founded.

I will cease here my analysis of Merton on anti-human, anti-woman bigotry, save to note that I have only taken you through half of his chapter on "Virginity and Humanism." The latter half is devoted to young girls. His deranged ravings on this subject, although increasingly revolting, deserve no more consideration, in spite of their continued alignment with Biblical text and modern 'moderate' Christian thought.

Part 2: Arrogance in the Mystic Tradition

Humility is a favored virtue of Christian theology. Or at least, it is a virtue given much lip service. Perhaps most especially among the poverty-sworn monks, like Thomas Merton. Christ himself says, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). That's one of many, many verses on the virtue of humility.

In a display of dark irony, Merton follows his chapter on how man is god unto woman with his chapter on humility. Merton, himself a mystic, informs us that English mystics,

have a charm and simplicity that are unequaled by any other school. And they are also, it may be said, generally quite clear, down-to-earth, and practical, even when they are concerned with the loftiest of matters. They never seemed to have thought of their life with God as something recondite or even unusual. They were simply Christians. (128)

Of course, Merton is quite right in saying these mystics were simply Christians. He concludes by noting that, "They rejoiced that in Him they had direct access to the Father of Lights." (Merton 129)

In a dictatorship where all are presumed guilty (original sin), and thought crime is punishable (the tenth commandment, Exodus 20:17), I ask you to imagine a citizen who believes that he has direct access to the Supreme Leader, the Father of Lights--an access others lack. Imagine

in the cinema of your mind a story with such a character--how likely is it that this citizen is given to humility?

The answer is too obvious to mention. I must so emphasize these words of Merton's because sometimes the most audacious acts of deception go unnoticed precisely because of their baldness. Merton follows his description of the English mystics with the claim that man,

had fallen from the divine likeness by centering all his love upon himself. The monastery and monastic life were designed to reeducate and reform man's capacity to love, liberating him from fixation upon himself. (132)

Indeed, a substantial part of Christian theology is devoted to the liberation of man from self-fixation. The mystics are held by Merton to be paragons of this practice. How did they achieve this humble feat? Don't worry, Merton is not one to leave us without concrete examples. But first, I should mention a certain Frenchman.

Pierre Simon de Laplace defined the mathematical theory of probabilities. He is one of the most influential and earth-moving scientists to have lived among us, and demonstrated a remarkable capacity for retaining his head in spite of standing up to Napoleon.

In his text *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities* Laplace observes,

The opinion that man has long been placed in the centre of the universe, considering himself the special object of the cares of nature, leads each individual to make himself the centre of a more or less extended sphere and to believe that hazard has preference for him. Sustained by this belief, players often risk considerable sums at games when they know that the chances are unfavorable. In the conduct of life a similar opinion may sometimes have advantages; but most often it leads to disastrous enterprises. Here as everywhere illusions are dangerous and truth alone is generally useful. (Hawking 473)

In the time of Laplace, the only opinion that had "long been placed" was the Christian opinion. Christianity erected a theology constituted on the belief that each individual human is infinitely beloved by the supreme Creator of the Universe, and that this Creator has a specific, divine plan for you personally. The act of prayer is founded on the belief that the Father of Lights will intercede in the natural world on behalf of his creatures. This is what miracles are. As Ivan Turgenev wrote,

Whatever a man prays for, he prays for a miracle. Every prayer reduces itself to this: Great God, grant that twice two be not four.

Much to the annoyance of Laplace, this ancient tradition tends to skew intuitive understanding of probabilities. One sympathizes.

Merton is certainly aware of this tradition. He quickly moves from his brief description of the Christian mystic and their focus on a liberation from self-love, to concrete examples. He quotes the famed mystic Anglican Thomas Traherne. Traherne is speaking on the "Redemption" that is given "only by the Holy Spirit,"

You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars; and perceive yourself to be

the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. (133)

I almost suspect Merton of being a subversive anti-Christian, so artfully does he juxtapose the Christian mystic's claim to humility with their own arrogance. Merton tells us that Traherne also says,

By this you may know that you are infinitely beloved: God hath made your spirit a center in eternity comprehending all, and filled all about you in an endless manner with infinite riches: which shine before you and surround you with divine and heavenly enjoyments. (133)

I apologize for quoting at such length, but the best way to demonstrate the lack of humility present even in the epitome of the Christian tradition is to let them speak for themselves. Remarkably, Merton follows the two preceding quotes with this gem, revealing that Traherne

adds a sentence that manifests the real inner spirit of the English mystics in all their love of the positive and of the concrete: We infinitely wrong ourselves by laziness and confinement. All creatures in all nations and tongues and peoples praise God infinitely: and the more for being your sole and perfect treasures. You are never what you ought till you go out of yourself and walk among them. (133-134)

As presented by a well-read devout expert on the subject, these mystics are the prime paragons which Christianity can produce. This is where Christianity will lead him who seeks to "liberate himself from fixation upon himself." And yet the quotes provided are the most self-centered, arrogant, delusions of self-importance I have ever read. Nevertheless, I believe Merton that this is the best Christianity has to offer on the record of humility.

It is difficult for me to imagine a more conceited phrase than, "Perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the world," and "you are infinitely beloved: God hath made your spirit a center in eternity." It is a testament to the depths of human presumption that anyone could say "All creatures in all nations and tongues and peoples praise God infinitely: and the more for being your sole and perfect treasures." This displays not even a disregard for people of other faiths, or no faith at all, but an apparent honest belief that *people of other faiths do not exist*, not really. Even C.S. Lewis was more than half-convinced that believers of other faiths were really praying to Christ, even if they didn't know it. This philosophy is invidiously called 'inclusivism.'

Feeling this way is fine (if megalomania suits you), but it is not humble nor is it liberating from self-fixation. Christopher Hitchens asks,

How much vanity must be concealed--not too effectively at that--in order to pretend that one is the personal object of a divine plan? How much self-respect must be sacrificed in order that one may squirm continually in an awareness of one's own sin? (7)

Laplace strikes much closer to the mark of humility in describing a world where no higher power is in the leastwise concerned about you in any way imaginable. A mechanistic world driven by science and probabilities, uncaring and even unaware of human lives and hopes and dreams, is certainly much more humble than a world where the Father of Light loves and cares for each person with infinite grace.

As is clear by even a modest survey of the literature of foreign nations past and contemporary, the virtue of humility is intuitively apparent to all humans, quite independent of religious instruction. So it is not surprising Christ has sought to cover His arrogance with a claim of humility. But after all, hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue.

Part 3: Religion Demands Hypocrisy, and Corrupts Critical Thought

Hypocrisy is an ugly thing, and does harm to those who practice it as well as those around them. I was struck by the similarity in tone between a personal experience of my own and one Christopher Hitchens relates. Hitchens tells us,

I have only once, in twenty-five years of often heated arguments in Washington, D.C., been threatened with actual violence. This was when I was at dinner with some staffers and supporters of the Clinton White House. One of those present ... questioned me about my most recent trip to the Middle East. He wanted my opinion as to why the Muslims were so 'all-fired, god-damn *fundamentalist*.' I ran through my repertoire of explanations, adding that it was often forgotten that Islam was a relatively young faith, and still in the heat of its self-confidence. ... I added that, for example, while there was little or no evidence for the life of Jesus, the figure of the Prophet Muhammad was by contrast a person ascertainable in history. The man changed color faster than anyone I have ever seen. After shrieking that Jesus Christ had meant more to more people than I could ever imagine, and that I was disgusting beyond words for speaking so casually, he drew back his foot and aimed a kick which only his decency--conceivably his Christianity--prevented him from landing on my shin. He then ordered his wife to join him in leaving. (127)

I had a similar, if less violent, conversation with my parents. We were having an after dinner talk, and my father mentioned how Islam calls itself "the religion of peace" when their religion commands them to kill the infidel, and their god justifies genocide. I replied that, though true of Islam, the same holds true of the Christian God, and Christ himself.

The Christian God commands the genocide of the Canaanites, I began to say.

On pointing this out, the 'changing of color' in my parents was remarkable. Disgust and anger were shown me for having quoted their own Bible. I was indignantly told the Christian God is different, because the "Canaanites are long dead, so His command to kill them all doesn't have any effect today." I paused to have a few sympathetic thoughts for the "forgotten and obliterated" Canaanites. I imagined an alternative future, slightly darker than our own, where an aging Eichmann says to his children "Hitler's Final Solution is not so bad, after all, for it is a thing of the past. No Jew lives today, so it hardly matters."

Hypocrisy is ugly.

I shut my mouth, and shortly took my leave. I wondered if perhaps my parents were justified. Maybe I was misinformed. I opened the Bible and checked the relevant verses. Turns out I was too generous with the Christian god.

The Christian god commands the genocide of not only the Canaanites, but also the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites (Exo 34:11). And that's just one verse. This is immediately after the Lord mercifully commands his own people to slaughter 3,000 of their own (Exo 32) for the crime of practicing a different religion.

I may note here that religious intolerance and persecution has been the cause of some of the worst tragedies to befall mankind. The gory god of Christianity consummated his hallowed Ten Commandments with a brutal slaughter of those of another faith.

In addition, this insatiable God personally slaughters every man, woman, and child of several large cities for failing to bow to His will. He enacts a grotesque execution against one of his own followers for the crime of watching her Lord destroy her home. Lest we forget, the Bible also reveals that this mass-murderer committed the ultimate crime against humanity in the Flood, indiscriminately slaughtering every last human with one exception. We are lead to believe children were crushed in flood-tempests, and unborn babes smothered beneath an endless storm. All life was annihilated, except for two of each species which the merciful God saw fit to save. The innocent and unborn children were not worth saving, but hey, at least two mosquitoes were granted divine grace!

This is to say nothing of the verses describing how slaves are to be kept (Exo 21), treated, beat, and what a good follower of the Lord is to do with the captured women of the people whom He has commanded to be ethnically cleansed (Num 31:17-18).

It has been objected that this was the Old Testament, and that the New Testament is better. There is a problem with this argument. In the first place, it is absurd to expect a person to believe the God of the Old Testament to be a substantially different God than that of the New Testament. God is eternal, right? If Christianity saw the Old Testament as a useless and ugly throwback to a more primitive era, they would not have based their entire theology on it, namely the concept of original sin and the need for forgiveness.

Secondly, it is simply not true that the Old Testament is worse than the New. By far, the most chilling and hideously inhuman verses come from Christ's mouth. The god of the Old Testament was a brutal torturer of his followers in life, but in all the books of the Old Testament never is it even implied that the tortures might continue after death. Death is a refuge from the petty tyranny of God, but He closes that loophole with Christ.

It is not until we encounter Christ's own words that even the concept of a hell is introduced to the tradition of this death cult. Christ condemns the disobedient to an eternity of torture (Mat 25:46), and commands his followers to view unbelievers as fools who can do no good, and are indelibly corrupt (Psalm 14:1 and Mark 9:43). The Old Testament God tortured those who live-- the New Testament God is not satisfied with this half measure. He must immolate in perpetuity even those who have died.

The words of the Bible and those who promote its teachings are an embarrassment to civil society. It is hoped that as more literary analysis is done upon the teachings of this bronze-age, tradition, and that as more and more people read the actual words they praise as God-given, the power of the religious will continue to wither and fade.

In the market of free ideas, where philosophical shoppers can read and compare all the available texts, the Bible is a proven loser.

Works Cited

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