

GOD, JESUS, AND THE BIBLE: The Origin and Evolution of Religion,
By William Harwood, 2009, World Audience Publishers, 303 Park Avenue South, #1440, New York, NY 10010, ISBN 978-1-935444-88-8, ppb, \$28, 978-1-935444-28-2, hc, \$40, 456 pp, reviewed by Leland W. Ruble.

Many individuals, unless totally lost in the belief that a god is more than a figment of the imagination, and not the deceptive manipulation of the clergy to maintain their status, have enough curiosity to find out whether or not the bases of their god beliefs are based on realistic, not imaginary fiction and myths. In this book the author William Harwood, presents for the reader a full and complete historical and religious record of how, over the ages, God as currently practiced by a variety of religions, has evolved from its primitive roots and expanded into what is recognized in the nontheist community as nothing more than an unrealistic symbol void of all substance.

The author has expanded his observations, historical data, and study into chapters, at the end of which there are numerous notes explaining in further detail the source and substance of an issue. There is also a complete index included to aid the reader in easily locating the page where a certain issue, person, or subject is discussed.

In the first chapter, “And Woman Created Goddess: The Origin of Religion,” there is this comment: “There is no way of gauging the elapsed time from the creation of the first god to the creation of the first religion; for mere belief in gods did not constitute a religion. (Even Inuit tribes that have never had any religion have included gods among the phenomena of the external world whose existence they have casually noted.) Not until the first true sun worshipper turned his face toward the god in the sky and asked it to ripen his crop in exchange for a gift, or until the first ambitious junior executive asked a river god to drown her rival, also in exchange for a designated gift, did nature deification evolve into religion” (p. 25).

This is followed by a comprehensive explanation for how and in what way primitive societies replaced Goddess the Mother with God the Father sometime during the years 3000 to 2000 BCE. Early mythology and astrology according to the author played a significant role in how early civilizations associated certain gods with specific tendencies. For instance, the author writes, “The first gods in the modern sense, capricious beings that needed to be constantly appeased lest they unleash the malevolence that was their most universal feature, were not the sky gods but the more accessible earth gods. The earth herself was generally hailed and adored as the Mother of all things. Her elder children, the birds that are not bound to the surface; the horse that can outrun any man; the sow that suckles a dozen infants to woman's one; the cow and goat without whose milk human was unlikely to survive; the fig tree, or tree of life, whose ripened fruit so resembled the vulva that was the source of all life; and

a host of other plants, animals, rivers and like immortals, human recognized to possess capacities that were lacking in himself” (p. 29).

What godworshippers do not, and many may never realize, is that their worship of a god is a wildly delusive effort, a futile attempt to seriously imagine that the distorted image in their minds is truly based on something far more realistic than astrological mumbo-jumbo, theological elitism, mystical quackery, and imaginary myths that inhabit the various religious denominations. Even when presented with the truth, an observant religious fundamentalist will find countless ways to avoid facing the truth concerning their beliefs. All one has to do is observe how frequently anti-evolutionists, presented with the facts, still insist on maintaining the Genesis fairy tale as the actual source of creation. Likewise for Flat Earthers, UFO conspirators, and those who *imagine* and sincerely believe that the remains of Noah's Ark exist on Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey.

A reading of this book would go a long way in educating the religious community to question the basis of their beliefs as the author explains in this paragraph: “Nonetheless, a slave mentality once acquired is not easily repudiated. Modern believers in such contrary-to-fact nonsense as astrology, spiritualism, Scientology, Bermuda Triangles, magical burial shrouds, past-life fantasies, near-death dreams, water witching, psychics, prophecy, palmistry, and ancient astronauts, differ very little from god addicts in their need to subjugate themselves to some “higher power” to which their own intellectual impotence can be attributed. Typical of the new sense is the religion-without-gods of UFOlogy” (p. 49).

In chapter Two, “Creation and Sin: The God Who Invented Death,” the author explores in depth, the Old Testament god, and how it was created in the Jewish Marduk tradition in the fifth century BCE, and became the basis for the book of Genesis. The author writes, “The Priestly author who wrote the Genesis creation myth, more than a thousand years after the Babylonian version, was a Jewish priest of the educated Levite caste who was thoroughly familiar with the myths of his tribe's neighbors. That he consciously adapted Babylonian tales for his own purpose is not in doubt, since his six-day creation paralleled the six-stage creation invented by Zarathustra, while the order of his creation was basically the same order in which Marduk created everything in the author's Babylonian source” (p. 58).

The author has listed the perceived sins (there are many) that were recognized as criminal, and some that were not considered sins until later Christian times, such as birth control, homosexuality for women, premarital sex etc. It's clear from this that it is religions based on a god, which have determined to a great extent what is perceived as moral or immoral in society. This is even more pronounced in societies where religious belief is dominant. For instance, the Islamic faith in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc., and in Christian dominated societies, such as the Holy See, Poland, Hungary, the Philippines, and South America, where religion plays a significant role in how laws function or how legislation contributes to its version of morality.

In this book there is such a vast amount of historical data, facts, etc., that it would be impossible to choose one particular part or chapter and use that as an example of the author's expertise in this most complicated, thoroughly examined, and easily readable expose of the gradual evolution of god in society. Here, however, is an example of the author writing about the myth of Solomon's temple: "Jewish oral propaganda over the 48 years from 586 to 538 BCE converted a temple smaller than Bozo's Big Top into something rivaling the Parthenon. The real Davidic "empire" was about the size of Pooh Bear's Hundred Acre Wood. Solomon's temple was about the size of an average McDonald's and not necessarily on the same site as the temple began under Darius 1 and refurbished by Herod. While the archaeologists are right in concluding that Jerusalem was not a bustling community during the Davidic dynasty's heyday, they are simply not allowing for the possibility that there was at least a kernel of truth behind the imaginative propaganda" (p.113).

In chapter Seven, "The Yahwist's Tales," the author demonstrates the close similarity between the *Epic of Gilgamesh* with the Old Testament version in Genesis. Here is one of many examples that clearly show that Genesis was composed using nearly the same plot and language as Gilgamesh in the writing of the creation story. Gilgamesh: *Enlil said to the gods in council, "The uproar of mankind is intolerable, and sleep is no longer possible on account of the babble." So the gods in their hearts were moved to release the deluge.* In the Yahwist version it reads, "We're going to destroy this place because a great outcry against them has come to Yahweh's attention, and Yahweh has sent us to destroy it" Gen. 19:13, (p. 140). There are numerous other examples to prove beyond a doubt that the book of Genesis was crafted using the Epic of Gilgamesh as the source for this chapter in the Old Testament.

In chapter Nine, "The Deuteronomist," the author writes: "The Deuteronomist added a new dimension to literary deception. Whereas the Yahwist and the Elohist had not put any signature to their works, the Deuteronomist pretended that his scroll emanated from the quill of a man who had been dead for six hundred years. He supported that contention by writing his collection of taboos, ritual and propaganda in the first person. Among the later writers who followed D's precedent were the authors of *Enoch and Daniel*; Joseph Smith; and the two fourth-century CE Greeks, 'Dares' and 'Dictys,' who claimed to be survivors of the Trojan War. The Deuteronomist claimed to be Moses" (p.159).

Chapter Thirteen, "From David to Jesus: The Age of the Messiah," explores in depth how Jesus supposedly descended from David, and is described in the New Testament as the imagined Messiah. Here is a brief explanation: "The earliest claimant to messiahship seems to have been the founder of the Essene sect, the Righteous Rabbi. While he first materialized around 140 BCE, it may be that he counted 483 years from 586 BCE and had himself proclaimed King of the Jews in 103 BCE. Such an action would explain why the Hasmonean King Alexander Yannai hanged him in that year. According to the Talmud, the hanging occurred on the eve of the Passover (*Sanh. 43a*), but as there is little doubt that the Talmud authors confused the execution of the Righteous Rabbi in 103 BCE with the

execution of Jesus the Nazirite 133 years later, that detail may have belonged only to a later event” (p. 228).

Another paragraph that explains the deluded, futile pursuit of god worship is this: “On the other hand, the teaching of the Essenes derived from Siddhartha Gautama (“Buddha”), whose disciples had penetrated as far as Egypt, were masochistic and antihuman, and equated sexual recreation with the promulgations of the goddess-turned-devil. The Essenes rejected Zarathustra’s classification of celibacy as a cardinal vice, and accepted Gautama’s delusion that self-inflicted joy-deprivation was a virtue” (p. 243).

And (p. 245), “Gautama’s teachings were accepted *in toto* by the Essenes, who remained celibate communists for the whole of their two-century existence.”

In chapter Fourteen, “Requiem For a Dead Jew,” there is this poignant paragraph explaining the true nature and not supernatural existence of Jesus: “There is no doubt that Jesus was Joseph’s natural son. Accusations that he was illegitimate were first made seventy years after Jesus’ death, when his equation in Greek eyes with the resurrected savior Dionysus led an interpolator to insert a virgin-birth myth into the gospel now known as *Matthew*. Since a Christian gospel was thus made to concede, in effect, that Jesus had not been sired by his mother’s husband, a Jewish writer accepted that (false) concession at face value and explained it by the most logical means. In fact Jesus died believing that Joseph was his father; Joseph died believing that he was Jesus’ father; and Mary died believing that Joseph was Jesus’ father. The pretence that such was not the case was first made in the reign of Trajan, when all the principals were safely dead and unable to sue for libel” (p. 290).

There is much more concerning Jesus’ actual birth, including the false, theofascist misrepresentation of the gospel writer Paul who used his deceptions to make the case for a severe, delusive Christianity that survives to this day in the fundamentalist hierarchies of the Protestant and Catholic religions. For instance, the religious opposition to women’s equal rights and other unjustifiable doctrines within the Christian faith are the result of Paul’s tyrannical preaching and theology.

In the Appendix, “Reviews of William Harwood’s Books,” there are numerous reviews of books published by the prolific author Dr. William Harwood. These are further examples of the author’s comprehensive expose of the Bible, God, and Jesus. The reader, upon reading this book, will not be left wondering whether the Bible is or is not a truthful depiction of a supernatural god. It is not! It is as the author explains in page after page of conclusions, a book that was composed to satisfy the deluded yearnings and ambitions of a priestly class, and its theofascist anxiety to impose on society a frivolous, incoherent dogma of beliefs that have no foundation in relation to the actual existence that we as humans, are born, live, and die.

I can assure the reader—if not already convinced—that this exceptional, scholarly book will open one’s mind to the wasted theological folly of religions based on the absurdity of beliefs formulated on the nonsense of a non-existing tyrannical bogeyman in the sky.