

Section 12 – Redefining the Sacred

Why Men Invented God

Our original deity was the Goddess, and we have seen how, little by little, she was supplanted. First she was given a male consort, to whom she had given birth. Then she was put under the control of that consort and had to rely on his approval. Later, she was married to him and became his legal possession. Moving on, she lost her powers to him – to the point where she disappeared altogether and her most basic and significant of all powers, creation, was given to a male god.

Women, once the centre of the culture, at least as high in status and power as men and able to regulate their own fertility, choose their own lovers and direct their own society, were similarly debased. First, the sisterhood of independent women and mothers was shattered, and women were made into objects to be possessed by men. No longer did they keep to their own group, their children around them knowing only their mothers. They were locked into their father's houses until they were sold in marriage to a man, who would then imprison them in his home, where they would bear and raise children to carry his name.

By the beginning of the first millennium BCE in Assyria and elsewhere, women's lot was execrable. Their sexuality and reproduction were totally controlled, and their only protection was as the property of individual men. Even to look at a woman was to defile the property of another man, so women had to hide themselves:

‘If the wives of a man, or the daughters of a man go out into the street, their heads are to be veiled.’¹

Even worse was to come. Not only were women oppressed to an unbearable level, their goddess had to be killed. Asherah, Astarte, those enfeebled descendants of the mercurial Inanna, who were women's only light in the darkness, were cast down, their altars removed from temples, their images broken. Women no longer even had the right to love and revere the Goddess. Instead, they feared an intransigent, jealous male god, Jahweh, whose power was sexual control through violence and coercion, just like that of their fathers and husbands:

‘a man may strike his wife, pull her hair, her ear he may bruise or pierce. He commits no misdeed thereby.’²

¹ *The Code of the Assura.*

Organised religion is the most efficient method of social control men have ever invented. It establishes a set of social values and hierarchies and failure to abide by its rules results in punishment, both before and even more horribly after, death. Fear, not love, became the force that governed society, and it still rules today.

In tandem with organised religion, men created hierarchical governance, and a mighty priest-King presided over both. Those at the top of the pyramid with him grew rich and powerful through their complete control over the rest of the population. They decided and wrote the laws and the punishments for breaking them. They built mighty armies and walled fortress cities to guard their wealth. Never satisfied, the powerful few used war to amass greater fortunes and increase their power, plundering and manipulating the land and its resources and dominating other men to the point of enslaving them, all ostensibly in the name of and for the greater glory of their God. The 'great' religious codes, venerated by billions of men and women, have shaped cultures that attempt to define both the planet and people as property, to be violently possessed by men.

All the Abrahamic monotheisms are based on a simple principle: God is a super-male who gave the men who worship him the Earth to do with as they will.

It is easy to recognise the patriarchy at work when Boko Haram kidnaps schoolgirls and later announces they are all 'married', a euphemism which equates to their having been sold as sex slaves. It is easy to see the patriarchy at work when the Taliban shoots Malala Yousafzai in the head for wanting to go to school or when another 'honour killing' hits the news or when we see women covered to the extent that their entire identity is removed. It is easy to see the patriarchy at work when Warren Jeffs rules the FLDS³ as a paedophilic tyrant with sixty wives, 'reassigns' women from one man to another to punish the men for less-than-absolute obedience, and casts out young males who might eventually challenge his authority – all with the help of a few male acolytes and a police force to enforce his 'laws'.⁴

The patriarchy elsewhere may be more sophisticated and more careful to hide itself, but it is just as virulent. We can discern it in the coalitions of influential men, wielding 'sacred' texts, who cause politicians to pass laws that limit women's access to contraception and abortion, thus putting control of women's fertility back into the hands of men. We see it in the derisory sentences handed down to rapists. We see it in the routine mockery, abuse and even murder

² *The Code of the Assura.*

³ Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Often referred to as 'the Mormons' although it is an extremist branch, not recognised by most Mormons.

⁴ Brower, S. & Krakauer, J. *Prophet's Prey: My Seven-Year Investigation into Warren Jeffs and the Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints.* Bloomsbury USA, 2011.

of LGBT people and in the attempts, backed by religious groups, to coerce African governments to introduce laws that would imprison them for life or worse, just for who they love. We see it when laws are passed that allow the richest donors and the largest corporations to decisively influence the US government and others through campaign donations and intensive lobbying. We see it in laws that punish the poor for being poor while the most egregious crimes against the public, such as those committed by the banking industry, go unpunished.

When neo-liberals insist that the names of those who hold government bonds, the imaginary 'debts' that enslave whole nations and their people must never be revealed, or when governments agree treaties which allow corporations to sue sovereign populations for exercising their democratic rights, we are looking at the patriarchy. When climate change deniers in public office cancel environmental protections, citing pseudoscience bought and paid for by the very corporations that are causing the problem, we are hearing its voice.

Former US president Jimmy Carter addresses the recent rise of inequity in both rich and poor countries. He says:

'There is a similar system of discrimination, extending far beyond a small geographical region to the entire globe; it touches every nation, perpetuating and expanding the trafficking in human slaves, body mutilation, and even legitimized murder on a massive scale. This system is based on the presumption that men and boys are superior to women and girls, and it is supported by some male religious leaders who distort the Holy Bible, the Koran, and other sacred texts to perpetuate their claim that females are, in some basic ways, inferior to them, unqualified to serve God on equal terms. Many men disagree but remain quiet in order to enjoy the benefits of their dominant status. This false premise provides a justification for sexual discrimination in almost every realm of secular and religious life.'⁵

Rome took its patriarchy and spread it across Europe, inventing a religion, Christianity, to support and perpetuate it. European colonialism spread this religion across much of the globe, along with the basic premise of Roman Imperialism: we have the right to take everyone else's land and to treat the planet as our sole possession, because we are permitted to by the god we invented. Elsewhere, Islam, another patriarchal cult which comes from the same Abrahamic root and has at its core the same implacable misogyny, has subjugated immense populations through violence and fear.

In the last century, in the West, some apparent improvement has been observed. People are not burned at the stake, and women have recovered some of their rights. In large measure this has

⁵ Carter, Jimmy. *A Call To Action: Women, Religion, Violence and Power*. Simon & Schuster. 2014.

only happened because the most recent economic system of the patriarchy, consumer capitalism, requires women to be pawns in the same exploitative game as men. The patriarchy is run by powerful men but not all men are part of the patriarchy. Men are frequently its victims too.

On the other hand, the oppression of women by the patriarchy is unending. The world is seeing a rape epidemic. In the US, 83,425 rapes were reported in 2011, meaning that a woman was raped every 6.2 minutes. In India, 24,206 rapes were reported in the same year. And these are only reported ones; studies have shown that 70% or more of rapes are never reported by the victims.⁶ All across the world, these figures hold true.

In addition, using primarily the Internet, the latest standard-bearers for the patriarchy, so-called 'Male Rights Activists' (MRAs) put up a smokescreen of obfuscation, attempting to minimise the horror and take the blame away from men and put it onto women themselves. Women are held responsible for causing their own rapes and are counselled in what to wear and how to behave in order to minimise the risk, while trivial sentences for rapists are condoned. Amazingly, this blatant campaign of rape apologism is given credence.

Fewer than 3% of rapists are ever convicted. Most suffer no penalty. Why should the patriarchy punish its rapists? They are frontline troops in its battle to maintain its stranglehold on women. Rape is one of the most severe abuses against women; only more severe when accompanied, as is often the case, by murder. It is extreme, and it is violent, and most men do not do it. However, it is just the tip of a huge iceberg. Much more prevalent are the lesser abuses, the ones that most men are guilty of: the sexual innuendoes; the preferential treatment of males; the dismissal of women's ideas; the routine acceptance of the fact that women are under-paid and under-represented in governments, at high levels in business and industry, and even in the professions. These are abuses that most men have, either knowingly or not, contributed to, and all women suffer from them.

In a chilling parallel, as well as raping and abusing women, the patriarchy is doing the same thing to the planet Earth, the Goddess herself. There is no longer any doubt that human-induced climate change is happening, and the consequences may be disastrous. Rather than accept this and stop the rape, the patriarchy, through corporations, a sycophantic media and complicit governments, is doing everything it can to prevent any reduction of this abuse. Just as MRAs condone the raping of women, climate-change deniers condone the rape of the planet.

These are two sides of the same coin, the micro-rape and the macro-rape. Men rape women; the patriarchy rapes the Goddess by destroying the planet.

⁶ Brown, J, Horvath, M, *et al.* *Has anything changed? Results of a comparative study (1977–2010) on opinions on rape.* Government Equalities Office (UK), 2010.

The patriarchy is the society we live in. It is a culture wherein men, without even thinking about it, expect and assume privilege over women and reinforce that through a framework of law and by patriarchal religions, political organisations, the academy, business, and the media, where powerful men have established domination and control.

The patriarchy is not a religion or an economic system, or individual men. It just uses these to get its way. The patriarchy is the expectation that men have rights over women's bodies and minds and the most brutal expression of that is rape. At its very core, the patriarchy is rape culture.

In the light of the evidence we have seen and the narrative we have traced, answering the question posed by the title of this book is simple. Men invented God because they wanted moral authority to assume total control over both women and the planet.