

P8 – Problems Religions Cause Groups

Dear: With the previous two chapters, I began the task of trying to show you some “sick social policies” that result from “belief” in various giant Jabberwocks in the sky. In those chapters, I purposefully focused on “simpler problems” that religions cause individuals. Now, starting with this chapter, I want to turn to some problems that religions cause various groups of people – although let me immediately add the obvious: the problems are still experienced by individuals.

There is the difference, however, that the problems to be addressed in this chapter (and the next) are experienced by all people who are affiliated or identified with some group (e.g., all atheists, all Blacks, communists, divorcees, environmentalists, free-thinkers, Gypsies, homosexuals, iconoclasts, Jews, Koran-believers, and so on through the rest of the alphabet). Additionally, I want to continue addressing the question *Who gets to define public morality, customs, & laws?* and if not to address then at least get closer to addressing the other two questions listed near the start of the previous chapter: *Is “social justice” possible? What are the prospects for peace and prosperity?* Actually, in a way this chapter is just an introduction to my response to those last two questions, but I hope that you’ll agree that some ideas in this “introduction” deserve your consideration. I’ll address them in more detail in the X-chapters.

At the outset, also, let me mention that while writing this chapter, fragments of the otherwise forgotten lyrics of some song have frequently come to mind. Maybe you remember the song: at the end of one of the verses (or maybe it’s at the end of the song, at least in its most popular version), the singer rapidly repeats “I know, I know, I know, I know”. Maybe the title of the song is “Ain’t no sunshine when you’re gone.” Anyway, similarly for this chapter, “I know, I know, I know, I know...” that much more could (and for other purposes, *should*) be said about groups, but I’ve needed to continually restrain myself, trying to focus on my “assignment” to show you what I mean by saying that “belief in god is bad science and even worse policy, in fact, pathetic policy: sad personal policy and sick public policy.” Yet, to begin this chapter, let me pretend that my “assignment” was broader; then, as I proceed, I’ll try to sharpen my focus.

Thus, Dear, if ever you want to investigate characteristics of human groups in general, then I'd recommend that you start where, by now, you probably expect that I'd recommend starting, namely, by asking: What's the objective? That is, what's the purpose (or purposes) people pursue by associating with (or disassociating from) various groups?

Knowing you, I wouldn't be surprised if you responded (intelligently) that it depends on the purpose (or purposes) of the group. Yet, although I would agree that the nature of the group is important, I would suggest (for a number of reasons) that it's more productive to focus on the objectives of individuals rather than on purposes of groups.

One reason I suggest that the focus should be on objectives of individuals is that, in a way, the concept of "the purpose of a group" is somewhat silly: groups don't have purposes, only people do! Yet, if the majority of the members of any group subscribe to some "avowed" purpose or "creed" (e.g., the Mormon's "Articles of Faith", the Christian's "Nicene Creed", the Mason's pledge, American's "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness", and so on), then in so far as people within the group agree on some common purpose, then I suppose its acceptable (and certainly it's customary) to describe the result as "the group's purpose" (meaning that all members of the group pursue "its" purpose).

A second reason why I'd recommend emphasis on purposes of individuals rather than of groups is that such an emphasis seems more consistent with the data. For example, when I wonder why my own father left us, I'm inclined toward the hypothesis that he was primarily pursuing his own objectives. Similarly, if your mother and father should "split up" [and now, years later, I should change that to "did split up"], I suspect that causes could be found by examining the importance that each of your parents places on personal objectives rather than on the objectives of your family. And similarly, when people conclude that their personal objectives will be promoted, they join or abandon various clubs, groups, companies, religions, and even entire societies. That is, Dear, I suspect that more understanding of "the dynamics of group membership" is available from focusing on objectives of individuals rather than on purposes of groups.

And the third reason why I would recommend emphasis on objectives of individuals is because such an emphasis seems to yield some order into what may otherwise seem to be an enormously chaotic collection of groups. To

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see what I mean, Dear, I challenge you to develop some classification scheme for organizing your thoughts about the following groups: stamp collectors, health clubs, fans of some celebrity, political parties, professional societies, religious groups, and nations. When I start thinking about so many different groups, with their thousands of different purposes, my mind returns to thoughts about the “ten thousand-and-one subgoals” that each human pursues – and my mind returns to the question of trying to understand the objectives of humans.

In that regard (as you know by now), my assessment of available data suggests to me the hypothesis that the prime pursuit of all humans is their trio of survival goals (of themselves, their extended families, and their values). I suspect, therefore, that most people associate with certain groups (and disassociate from others) primarily depending on their opinions about how “the group’s purpose” promotes (or inhibits) their own trio of survival goals – although I admit that 1) thereby a lot must be swept under the “values rug” and that 2) a major component of the membership in any group is in response to “animal instinct” for survival. For example, if I tried to understand why someone would join a stamp collection “society”, then I’d investigate 1) if somehow the person has concluded that stamps have some “value” (because some stamps are quite pretty, they show great variety, they provide some insight into history, societies, geography, etc.) and 2) if the person is responding to an instinctive desire (or “learned need”) to be affiliated with some group, to receive either instinctive “survival signals” or those learned in childhood – or in some other way is following some behavior learned in childhood.

In other cases, however, there’s a much clearer relationship between (and even a “happy alignment” with) an individual’s prime goals and the purpose (or purposes) of some group with which they’re affiliated. Thousands of examples could be given; here, let me list just a few, chosen essentially at random. You want to play more tennis (to get more exercise, to receive various “survival signals”); so, you join a tennis club whose prime goal is to arrange more time that members can play tennis. You want to help your community and your society (especially to be able to respond to disasters); so, you join the Red Cross as a volunteer. You want to promote civil liberties; so, you join the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union). You want to help the children of the world; so, you join “Save the Children Foundation”. And so on: you join groups that have been successfully pursuing goals that you think are important to pursue.

And while I'm thinking about it, Dear, let me add some praise: praise for the writers of the "Bill of Rights" of our Constitution for their statement "Congress shall make no law respecting... the right of the people peaceably to assemble..." and praise for the many wonderful "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs), such as "Save the Children Foundation", "Doctors without Borders", and so many others, that are working so hard and effectively to help humanity.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the coin, if people find that the purpose or purposes of some group with which they're associated aren't aligned with their own purposes, then at least in a free society, members abandon the group. For example, people abandon even their own families if they conclude that the abandonment will promote what they've adopted as a higher priority goal – which, if you think about it, is rather strange, given that most people seek the survival even of their extended family, let alone their immediate family. In such cases, however, such people must conclude that their own survival or the "survival" of one of their values (such as their freedom) is at greater risk than the survival of their family. Such must have been in the case for my father, who left his family (his wife and five children) when I was about six years old. [And now, years later, you have personal experience with another case: your mother divorced your father, saying to me that the reason was that she wanted her "freedom".]

And with [those] examples, Dear, there are other concepts that could be examined and that you might consider to be interesting. Thus, the fact that our society provides a "safety net" (welfare) to support abandoned families can have the undesirable consequence of permitting more fathers to abandon their families – and thereby, our family went on welfare when I was about twelve. [And the facts not only that divorces can be obtained relatively easily but also that our courts force continued financial support for the children can have the undesirable consequence of making divorces appear to be an attractive, relatively "painless" option – at least for parents.] Such ramifications are illustrations of what's commonly called "the law of unintended consequences" and what's also called the first principle of ecology: "You can never do just one thing." And yes, Dear, "I know, I know, I know, I know, I know..."

But beyond such cases, in which it's relatively easy to see that a person's goals (or alleged goals) are either aligned or nonaligned with some group's

goals, there are cases of human groups quite distinct from groups of other animals. Thus, many (but not all) animals form into groups (think of herds of cattle, schools of fish, flocks of birds); in such cases, it's usually relatively easy to see how such behavior promotes a member's dual survival goals (of themselves and their genes). We humans have a similar instinct, "programmed" into our genes by natural selection (because of the survival value of such behavior, in turn because of the relative incompetence of individual humans to survive "in the wild" without the help of fellow humans). Yet, we humans are definitely a "breed apart", because in response to ideas in our relatively massive brains, we associate with or disassociate from groups for reasons not only based on our instinct for survival (or at least, our desire to "pick up some survival signals", such as in rock climbing, sky-diving, and motorcycle riding!) but also based primarily on just ideas, i.e., to promote what we decide are (or have been taught to adopt as) our values.

Again, thousands of examples are available: think of groups committed to promoting various economic, political, and religious ideas. As an example of the formation of groups based on economic ideas, consider the case of a group of people (usually a group of mostly poor people, with only a few who are rich) who decide all property should be held "in common". Thereby, they become a group of communists – as occurred in the first groups of Christians (see *Acts 2, 44*), although these "experiments" soon failed. Similar "experiments" were tried in Mormonism and continued for many years; for example, see Chapter 9, "The Order of Enoch", of the 1920 book (which is on-line) by R.C. Evans entitled *Forty Years In the Mormon Church; WHY I LEFT IT!* Of course, it's easy to argue that people who become communists are "just" pursuing their dual survival goals (similar to animals), but I would ask you to notice, Dear, that quite distinct from other animals, such people primarily pursue the *idea* of communism (and its associated values). In the case of formation of groups based on political ideas, there are so many examples that I want to omit all of them! And then there are the thousands of groups that form based on religious ideas – which finally brings me closer to my assignment!

Toward trying to understand religious groups, Dear, notice that, for any group organized primarily to pursue some ideas (or values), it's common (and understandable) that members are required to conform to "the party line". If you're a member of a group of communists, for example, then don't expect that any pro-capitalist remarks that you make will be well received –

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and similarly for capitalists who promote communism. As another example, if you're a member of the Democratic party, then your membership will be jeopardized if you start advocating some "plank" in the Republican party's "platform". And I don't need to tell you anything about the need to abide by the Mormon's "Articles of Faith"!

In the case of religious groups, however, there are some characteristic features of "group think" that are quite different and really quite amazing. I trace this difference to two sources: governance and data – which will take me awhile to explain. First, let me comment on "group governance".

To promote its purposes, every group establishes a set of premisses, policies, and procedures (including a set of premisses, policies, and procedures by which the group is governed), thereby permitting the creation of additional policies and procedures. In the "excursion" **Yx**, I'll try to show you some history of the amazing twists, turns, and contortions that groups have gone through, throughout history and throughout the world, formulating, testing, and in many cases discarding various ways to govern groups. To illustrate what I'm trying to describe, let me give you a brief outline of how the governance of the Mormon Church evolved.

As I'll show you in detail in **Yx**, the Mormon Church appears to have started out as quite an amazing form of dictatorship, with the benevolent dictator Sidney Rigdon (who apparently was trying to help people) concealing himself behind the "front man", Joseph Smith. Rigdon apparently used this deception because he had concluded that, thereby, people would more likely accept his idea that the Book of Moron had a "supernatural origin": for obvious reasons, he didn't want people to recognize that he had written it and he was apparently quite confident that no one would suspect that the ignorant "gold digger" Joseph Smith could write such a complex story (because Smith was quite well known to be essentially illiterate).

Obviously the ruse deceived many people, but what Rigdon failed to appreciate was that Smith was a competent con-artist, even if his formal education was deficient – and what a novice con-artist such as Rigdon should have known was to be very careful when trying to con a competent con-artist! As a result, within a few years of establishment of the Mormon Church, the con-artist Smith decided that he no longer needed Rigdon to rule the group: Smith took control and became a tyrant.

After acquiring all the money and women that he could handle (in fact, after he acquired more women than he could handle!), Smith not only became dictator of the Church but also sought the Presidency of this country! Subsequently, after Smith was killed in a gunfight resulting from one of his “love affairs” (with a married woman), Brigham Young took over the church as its second dictator. Subsequent evolution of Church government led to its now being ruled by a council of “wise men”, called “the Quorum of Twelve”, led by a president.

If you’ll investigate the matter, Dear, you’ll find that all principal religions are governed similarly: by dictatorship of a “monarchy” (literally, “one man rules”, as a Pope or a Grand Ayatollah or a Chief Rabbi or whatever) or a dictatorship of an “oligarchy” (literally, “a few rule”, such as “the Quorum of Twelve”, “the Council of Deacons”, or a “ruling council” of whatever). Certainly no principal religion is governed as a democracy, which (with “demo” meaning “the people”, literally means “the people rule”).

For example, I can imagine the response by your Church’s oligarchy if you started circulating a petition among fellow members in an attempt to change some Church policy: “You think that homosexuals should be welcomed into our Church; ya gotta be kidding; it’s against Church policy – and that’s that!” Similarly, if a historian finds evidence that still another story about the Jesus of the New Testament is just another “priestly fabrication” (i.e., lie), if another historian finds that still another “law” in the Koran wasn’t specified by Muhammad but was inserted by a later Islamic cleric, and if still another historian finds still more evidence that the Book of Mormon was a total fabrication by Sidney Rigdon and foisted onto the world by the “gold digger” Joseph Smith, then in all such cases, such “blasphemers” should expect to be expelled from their respective religious groups for promoting their ideas.¹

¹ To me, it’s heartening to see that similar may not be true for Jewish historians and archaeologists. As I’ll show you in Yx (or as you can find by yourself by searching on the internet), in an article entitled “The Jig Is Up! And We’re Dancing to It!”, published in the 2003 January/February issue of the *American Rationalist*, Bernard Katz writes:

Abraham, the Jewish patriarch, probably never existed. Nor did Moses. The entire Exodus story as recounted in the Bible probably never occurred. The same is true of the tumbling of the walls of Jericho. And David, far from being the fearless king who built Jerusalem into a mighty capital, was more likely a provincial leader – a warlord – whose reputation was later magnified to provide a rallying point for a fledgling nation. Such startling propositions – the product of findings by archaeologists digging in Israel and its environs over the last 25 years – have gained wide acceptance

In “free societies”, in contrast, people can usually promote their ideas without fear of reprisal (e.g., fear of being expelled from the society). There are, however, many exceptions. For example, ideas that stimulate violence are usually prohibited; e.g., it’s illegal to yell “Fire!” in a crowded theater. Further, if people can promote their ideas (without fear for their own or their family’s survival) and if they have data to support a position opposed to the “party line”, then not only can such information be shared but also it may be welcomed by members of the group.

As an example of how you might behave in a political group, suppose you were a member of the Democratic Party (which, for example, generally advocates a “social safety-net”). Suppose, further, that you had data supporting some idea that the Republican’s promote (e.g., that it’s damaging to poor families to provide more welfare to unwed mother with every additional child they have). Then, you could expect not only that your data would be welcomed by fellow Democrats but also that they wouldn’t advocate that your membership in the Party be revoked – although they might question the reliability or your interpretation of the data.

It’s totally different, however, in “totalitarian societies”, in which people aren’t free. In Cuba, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or North Korea, for example (just as was the case in Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, Stalin’s Soviet Union, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, and in so many other societies), then even if you had data to support some idea, if the idea didn’t conform to “the party line”, you’d better keep quiet. For example, if you lived in Cuba, then even if you had reliable data to support the idea that communism leads to horribly inefficient bureaucracies, yet from available data showing what happens to “counter revolutionaries”, you’d be well advised to keep your ideas to yourself. Thus, Dear, notice that the “learned behavioral differences” of people in different groups depends on group governance.

among non-Orthodox rabbis. But there has been no attempt to disseminate these ideas or to discuss them with the laity – until now...

The notion that the Bible is not literally true “is more or less settled and understood among most Conservative rabbis,” observes Davis Wolpe, a rabbi at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles... But some congregants, he says, “may not like the stark airing of it.” Last Passover, in a sermon to 2200 congregants at his synagogue, Rabbi Wolpe frankly said that “virtually every modern archeologist agrees that the Bible describes the Exodus is not the way it happened, if it happened at all.” The rabbi offered what he called a “litany of disillusion” about the narrative, including contradictions, improbabilities, chronological lapses, and the absence of corroborating evidence...

In the case of religious groups, though, there's "double trouble" – both from how the groups are governed (almost invariably they're "totalitarian regimes") and from the nature of the "data" (or more commonly, the lack thereof) on which the leaders of religious groups base their ideas. To see what I mean about the nature of the data on which different groups base their ideas, consider the following outlines (more details of which I'll provide in **Yx**) for political vs. religious decisions.

When the founders of our political system tackled the task of defining a new type of government, data (of variable quality) were available from previous "experiments in governance". Many such experiments were failures, such as the first "direct democracy" of Ancient Athens (which degenerated almost to "mob rule", with the poor expropriating property of the rich), most monarchies (which commonly degenerated into tyranny), and the Catholic Church (which demonstrated that "power corrupts" even those who claim to be "righteous"). On the other hand, data were available for some successes (or at least partial successes) in governance, such as the "representative democracies" of Ancient Rome, some branches of "reformed Christianity" (sects that broke free from the Catholic Church and whose congregations practiced varying degrees of self governance), the "self governments" of some of the colonies (albeit still officially ruled by a British governor), and especially the advances made in self governance by the British people (advances that started with the signing of the Magna Carta or *Magna Charta*, which is Latin for "Great Charter", in 1215).

From such data, the founders of our political system (especially Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison) developed ideas (or hypotheses) about a new type of representative government, ideas that were eventually formulated in our Constitution – not, however, without substantial controversies, including controversies about the data and their interpretations. In later chapters, I'll outline some of these controversies and recommend that you read some of the original arguments, contained in what are called *The Federalist Papers*. Here, though, all I want you to notice is something obvious: although there were many arguments about the wisdom of the proposed new type of "republican" government (in which representatives of the people would rule), essentially everyone apparently did their best to understand and interpret the data, and essentially no one was expelled from society for espousing countervailing opinions. As a single illustration, Alexander Hamilton never abandoned his opinion that a monarchy was the best form of government, and yet this nation's first

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president, Washington, wisely assigned Hamilton to be the nation's first Treasury Secretary.

A more recent example of a group of free people struggling to define policies is the case of the German people trying to define their economic system after WWII – which led to the (West) German “economic miracle” of the 1960s. In barest outline, the method used was to make an open assessment of all “economic systems”, practiced or theorized. On the one side of the evaluation were various forms of capitalism, from the *laissez-faire* of antiquity (and of the early U.S.),² to the more “socially responsible” forms of capitalism as advocated by Adam Smith and as generally put into practice by the Bismarck administration in Germany and F.D. Roosevelt's administration in the U.S. On the other side of the evaluation were various forms of communism, from the democratic forms described, for example, in the New Testament, to various types of “command” communism, such as in the Soviet Union.

If you want to investigate some of these evaluations and the choices made, Dear, then you might want to start by reading the article by Konrad Zweig entitled “The Origins of the German Social Market Economy – The Leading Ideas and Their Intellectual Roots”.³ Searching on the internet, you can find more current information (and information on current attempts by Germany to refine and redefine its economic system, to respond to global competition). You should also be aware of detractors such as Louis Dudek who wrote: “The German method is to go to the principle of things, to select the wrong principle, and to build on that”! In any event, let me add that, as I write this, whether the Germans will be able to make needed reforms to their economic system (to reduce “worker-welfare programs”) and whether Americans will be able to make needed reforms to our political system (to constrain some “factions” that have gained too much power) remains to be seen. Here, however, I want just to provide a contrast between methods outlined for the above two examples and methods used by religious groups to establish their policies.

The point I want to make is this: for any group to establish sound policies, both group governance and group discussion of relevant data are critically

² As maybe you know, Dear, *laissez-faire* literally means “let (people) do (as they please)”; it has come to mean “noninterference, especially by government, in trade, industry, and individual action.”

³ Available at <http://www.adamsmith.org/policy/publications/pdf-files/social-market-economy.pdf>.

important. Thus, similar to the methods used in this country to establish our political system after our revolutionary war, the methods used in Germany to establish their economic policies were another case in which group members did their best to try to define policies *via* open discussions and evaluations of all relevant data. It's hoped that similar methods will continue to be used as Americans try to improve our political system and as Germans try to improve their economic system. But in contrast (in fact, in blatant and bizarre contrast!) are the methods used by all "orthodox" religious groups (such as the Mormons or Baptists or Catholics or Muslims or Judaists...) to establish their policies: as I'll try to show you, the methods used in orthodox religions are sickening – and have led to some astoundingly sick policies.

One example (for which at least some information is available and which is relevant to the experiences of certain grandchildren) was a pivotal event in the establishment of Christianity, namely, the decision to adopt the policy that the clerics' Jesus was "the son of God." I'll provide more information on this lunacy in the excursion **Yx**; here, let me just quote a great online book entitled *The Fallible Gospels: Reasonable Observations on the Origins of Christianity* recently written by Graham Lawrence. In the quotation below, I've added a few notes in square brackets and the italics.⁴

By the time of Constantine [Emperor of Rome for 31 years, from 306–337], many disputes had developed over the questions of divinity and [or maybe a better word than 'and' would be 'versus'] humanity of Jesus. Had Jesus actually been God, or was he truly and completely human? In what sense was he divine? – divinely appointed, divinely adopted, pre-existent and eternally divine, or distinct from and inferior to God? There was no one [or maybe better, 'single'] Pope with authority over such matters for the whole Church. The Bishops of Alexandria and Antioch had as much power in their regions as the Bishop of Rome had in his. [That is, Dear, although Christian groups in different cities were "governed" by their Bishops (essentially as dictators), there was no single "governor" for all Christianity.]

In an attempt to sort these matters out, [the Roman Emperor, later "Saint"] Constantine called a Council of the supreme leaders of all the Christian churches in 325 CE [the same year that "the butcher emperor" murdered his wife and son]. This ["Council of the supreme leaders"] was held at Nicaea, which today is Iznik in northwest Turkey. The two main factions were headed by Arius and Alexander. [As you probably know, Dear, a 'faction' is a subgroup that promotes a particular idea.] Arius was on the side of a more human Jesus, distinct from and inferior to God. Alexander was on the side of a thoroughly divine Jesus, God Incarnate. There was heated and passionate debate.

⁴ Copied from <http://freespace.virgin.net/graham.lawrence/index.htm>.

Such battles could only be won or lost on supposition and eloquence, on innate prejudice and preference, not on whether assertions could be substantiated in any meaningful way. [That is, Dear, no reliable data were available to evaluate claims; all opinions were just speculations.] It is also important to remember that the deification of a man [i.e., proclaiming him to be a god], to [or maybe better, ‘for’] a fourth century Roman emperor, was not perceived in the way it would be by a twentieth century political leader. Constantine had already arranged for the deification of his own father, Constantius. [It was, however, not so easy ~400 years earlier: when Julius Caesar proclaimed himself god, Brutus and co-conspirators murdered him – to try to protect the Roman type of republican government from becoming a monarchy.] Constantine was most impressed by the arguments [for Jesus being a god] of Alexander’s chief spokesman, Archdeacon Athanasius, so he ruled in their favor. Jesus was declared to be “Very God of Very God, Begotten, Not Made, Being of One Substance with the Father by Whom all Things were Made.”

Before telling anyone else to believe [that Jesus was God’s son], Christians [and Mormons!] should have to [or ‘should be required to’] think about [and explain!] the reason Jesus is said to be divine. It was not a message from the heavens. It wasn’t ‘true’. It was a political decision by a pragmatic but superstitious man, a politician [the Emperor Constantine] who had to choose one side or another to try and stop an argument over theory [that had zero support from data!].

Now, Dear, I’m sure you were able to follow the ideas in the above quotation, but let me suggest an analogy – in an attempt to “drive the idea home”, because as far as I’m concerned, the concept is critically important.

Thus, suppose that you belonged to a group that “believed” in invisible flying elephants. Suppose, further, that as time passed, a question arose about the color of invisible flying elephants: one subgroup of members (one faction) insisted that the invisible flying elephants were the same colors as visible non-flying elephants (most being gray, with the occasional “albino”), while other factions insisted that flying elephants were of various colors of the rainbow – with the general tendency, it would seem, for people to form into subgroups that claimed the color of the invisible elephants were the same as the color that members of each subgroup considered to be their favorite color! Finally, suppose that (just as with the early Christian subgroups), not only were no data available but also no policies were in place to settle the dispute about the color of the revered, invisible, flying elephants.

Then what to do? How could “the color-controversy” be settled? No data are available: invisible flying elephants are notorious for not permitting

their color to be seen! Put the matter to a vote? Whose mind would that change? It would just split the group into a large number of subgroups (as many factions as colors advocated). Well, if the factions behaved in a manner similar to the behavior of the early Christian subgroups, they would bring the matter before a “higher authority”, such as the Emperor of Rome or, in your case, a certain grandfather! Whereupon, of course I would declare (or even “decree”) the obvious: “All invisible flying elephants are pink.” And if you think that’s crazy, kid, then I challenge you to explain how it’s any crazier than the method used to decide that Jesus was a god!

Consequently, as a result of having absolutely zero data on which to base decisions, religions have no option but to proclaim dogma – out of thin air! Illustrative of such dogma is not only the Mormon’s “Articles of Faith” but similarly the Christian’s “Nicene Creed”, which is a required “statement of faith” for essentially all Christians. The original version of the Creed (generated at the same 325 CE get-together in Nicaea at which “the butcher Emperor” Constantine deified Jesus) was essentially as follows (although the version below contains modifications made at a subsequent get-together, again at Nicaea, in 381 CE).⁵

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

The major change to this “Nicene Creed”, made at the “Second Ecumenical Council” in 381 was to add a requirement for “belief” in a “Holy Spirit”:

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

⁵ Copied from <http://www.creeds.net/ancient/nicene.htm>.

The “Third Ecumenical Council” of 431 reaffirmed the 381 version, cementing the dogma of the “Christian Trinity” (of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost), decreeing:

It is unlawful for any man to bring forward, or to write, or to compose a different Faith as a rival to that established by the holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Ghost in Nicaea.

Subsequently, the only other really important proclamation was your grandfather’s decree that all invisible flying elephants are pink.

Now, Dear, you may think that I shouldn’t “be that way” (that I shouldn’t ridicule anyone’s religion), but obviously I disagree – and so did President Thomas Jefferson. In his 30 July 1816 letter to Francis Adrian Van der Kemp, Jefferson wrote:⁶

Ridicule is the only weapon which can be used against unintelligible propositions. Ideas must be distinct before reason can act upon them; and no man ever had a distinct idea of the trinity. It is the mere Abracadabra of the mountebanks calling themselves the priests of Jesus.

Jefferson’s problems with “the metaphysical” ideas in the above Nicene Creed (led by the metaphysician “Saint” Athanasius) were further elaborated in his 18 September 1813 letter to William Canby:

These metaphysical heads, usurping the judgment seat of God, denounce as his enemies all who cannot perceive the Geometrical logic of Euclid in the demonstrations of St Athanasius, that three are one, and one is three; and yet that the one is not three nor the three one.

Similar is seen in Jefferson’s 1816 letter to Archibald Carey:

On the dogmas of religion, as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarreling, fighting, burning and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

Jefferson seemed to try to nail the coffin shut in his 4 November 1820 letter to Rev. Jared Sparks:

⁶ The Jefferson quotations are from <http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/jefferson.htm>; the subsequent Adams’ quotations are from <http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/adams.htm>; both web resources (and more!) were created by Cliff Walker.

The metaphysical insanities of Athanasius, of Loyola, and of Calvin, are, to my understanding, mere relapses into polytheism, differing from paganism only by being more unintelligible.

Further, in an amazing series of letters between the second and third presidents of this country (a series of letters that I wish all American children would read!), John Adams and Thomas Jefferson demonstrated their revulsion toward the Christian Creed. Thus, in his 22 August 1813 letter to Adams, Jefferson wrote:

It is too late in the day for men of sincerity to pretend they believe in the Platonic mysticism that three are one and one is three, and yet, that the one is not three, and the three not one... But this constitutes the craft, the power, and profits of the priests. Sweep away their gossamer fabrics of fictitious religion, and they would catch no more flies.

In his 3 December 1813 letter to Jefferson, Adams replied:

Indeed, Mr. Jefferson, what could be invented to debase the ancient Christianity which Greeks, Romans, Hebrews and Christian factions, above all the Catholics, have not fraudulently imposed upon the public? Miracles after miracles have rolled down in torrents.

In his 15 August 1820 letter to Adams, Jefferson wrote:

To talk of immaterial existences is to talk of nothings. To say that the human soul, angels, god, are immaterial, is to say they are nothings, or that there is no god, no angels, no soul. I cannot reason otherwise... without plunging into the fathomless abyss of dreams and phantasms. I am satisfied, and sufficiently occupied with the things which are, without tormenting or troubling myself about those which may indeed be, but of which I have no evidence.

In his 11 April 1823 letter to Adams, Jefferson added:

The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as his father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.

In one of his last letters to Jefferson, Adams wrote:

Twenty times in the course of my late reading have I been on the point of breaking out, "This would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it!!!"

In the same letter, Adams disavowed this proclamation of his, suggesting (incorrectly!) that religion was useful to promote public morality, but Jefferson responded:

If by religion we are to understand sectarian dogmas, in which no two of them agree, then your exclamation on that hypothesis is just, “that this would be the best of worlds if there were no religion in it.”

Anyway, Dear, do you see then what I mean about “the importance of both group governance and data”? If no data are available (or if policies prohibit evaluation of available data), then for any group to establish its policies, the policies must be arbitrarily chosen by some dictator – the Emperor of Rome, the Pope, a chief Rabbi, the head Ayatollah, the president of the Church, or (for more enlightened people) a certain grandfather! Otherwise (and depending on risks “to life and limb”), the group will splinter into factions, according to chosen colors of invisible flying elephants or according to some other, similar and arbitrary, characteristic. That’s what happened with the establishment of now literally thousands of Christian “sects” (including the Mormons) that no longer accept the Pope’s dictatorship: each sect, led by its own dictator (such as the President of the Mormon Church), adopted its own peculiar “orthodoxy” about the color of invisible flying elephants!

Now, Dear, let me admit that “I know, I know, I know, I know...” that much could be written here (and even more could be read!) about how the “Protestant” Christian sects broke free, “protesting” the Pope’s dictatorship, “reforming” the Christian religion during the “Reformation”. Martin Luther (1486–1546), who was professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg (Germany), is generally credited as the “brilliant leader” of this “reformation”, but if ever you study details, Dear (and I’ll provide a few in the excursion **Yx**), I wouldn’t be surprised if you conclude something similar to my conclusion: he was close to being a raving lunatic, he was duped by German princes (who were “sick and tired” of paying “tributes” to the Roman Pope), and he just happened to be playing with matches when society was extremely flammable (courtesy advances in science, humanism, and individualism, collectively called “the Renaissance”).

But such details aren’t relevant to the points that I want to make. What I hope you see, Dear, is not only that it’s all “balderdash” but also that it’s all far, far worse than totally useless garbage! Millions and millions of “man years” (thousands of people per year working for more than a thousand

years!) of laborious thinking and arguing about religious “junk” for which not even the tiniest crumb of reliable data has ever been available. As an example, Martin Luther became totally stumped:

Many sweat to reconcile St. Paul and St. James, but in vain. “Faith justifies” and “faith does not justify” contradict each other flatly. If any one can harmonize them I will give him my doctor’s hood and let him call me a fool.

And thus Sidney Rigdon started up his own “sect” (Mormonism), in part because he decided (arbitrarily!) what all subsequent Mormons have had to memorize in the Mormon’s Articles of Faith #4: “We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith...” But then later, someone decided to “hedge the bet” with Article #13: “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men...”

If the enormous waste of intellect hadn’t occurred – and if it didn’t continue to occur – I doubt that anyone could believe that people could be so stupid! Almost endless arguments about how many angels can dance on the head of the pin. Eventually, the arguments are finally ended by the dictator of each sect proclaiming: “The Pope [or Chief Rabbi or Head Ayatollah or Church President or...] decrees that 17 angels can dance on the head of a pin – and that’s all there is to it!”

Would that it would be “that’s all there [was] to it”! In reality, absolutely horrible policies have been perpetrated, based on little more than the whims of some religious group’s dictator or chief spokesman (Moses, “Saint” Paul, “Saint” Constantine”, Muhammad, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, a Pope, a Chief Rabbi, a Head Ayatollah, or whoever). The resulting idiocy staggers the mind. Let me give you some examples.

One example is the Christian idea of “original sin”. In earlier chapters I already wrote some on this example (and will write more in later chapters); here, I’ll quote what Francis Clark wrote both about “original sin” and about the associated concept of “salvation” in Chapter Five (entitled “The Pagan Perspective”) of his book *Monotheism and Madness*.⁷

⁷ Previously, Dear, this book was available online, but now it seems to have disappeared. At the website <http://www.eleusis.com/one.html> the following statement appears: “This page will soon host the first pages of a book called *Monotheism and Madness*. I will start uploading pages as time permits.”

In viewing Christian morality there are two concepts that present the pagan, especially the moral pagan, with a quandary when attempting to understand this faith and its pretense to morality. The first is original sin, the second is salvation.

Original sin is a core doctrine of Christianity, though it did not become so until after the time of Augustine. The derivation of this doctrine and its variance from pagan belief is well documented...

This theory of original sin has come to be generally accepted within modern Christianity. Augustine's theory of original sin not only proved politically expedient, since it persuaded many of his contemporaries that human beings universally need external government – which meant, in their case, both a Christian state and an imperially supported church – but also offered an analysis of human nature that became, for better or worse, the heritage of all subsequent generations of Western Christians and the major influence on their psychological and political thinking. Even today, many people, Catholics and Protestants alike, regard the story of Adam and Eve as virtually synonymous with original sin...

But the doctrine itself is flawed. If mankind is born “in sin,” then someone has rigged the cosmic game against us. How can we be expected to be good by a god that has created us evil? Translated into a secular concept, original sin implies that the natural human inclination is to be “sinful,” i.e., to have a preference to do the wrong thing. To Augustine, involuntary sexual desire was the proof of our sinfulness and the basis of his development of the doctrine. For many Christians of subsequent generations, the powerful human sex drive is considered animalistic. On the other hand, the pagan sees our sex drive as proof of our godlike nature. It is our emulation of the divine passions represented by Aphrodite and Eros. To criticize it as animalistic is to lower the value of something that should be esteemed as sacred...

My primary point is that it is difficult to believe that we are born sinful. I do not see much evidence of sin in the face of an infant. However, a belief in original sin is very efficient from the point of view of the Christian church. It means that all must participate in this religion in order to gain forgiveness for the “stain” that we are born with. Inaction assures damnation. And original sin becomes a justification for forced conversion, since the unconverted are destined for eternal torment without the salvation of Christianity. To offer the choice of convert or die is morally acceptable to the Christian, since the unconverted are assured eternal death and damnation in any event. To convert by the sword may cause the immediate death of many, but this is only shortening their inevitable journey to damnation. If even a few gain the potential for eternal life, the actions are justified, even “moral.” The contorted logic of “convert by the sword” leads both Christianity and Islam to deny the first commandment.

This thought brings us to the doorstep of the second key doctrine, that of salvation. Without the salvation that Christians believe can be achieved only through the forgiveness and grace of god, we are destined for eternal damnation in a realm of

horrible pain. This absurd doctrine means that we can live a perfectly moral life, doing all that we can for others and our society, and still earn eternal damnation if we do not actively participate in the rituals of Christianity and ask for forgiveness of our sins. It is a core doctrine of Protestantism (as defined by Martin Luther) that the just are saved by faith, not by good acts.

But it is not the neat logical trap of salvation and forgiveness that concerns me as much as the fact that such doctrines inevitably undermine any pretense of morality. It establishes the principle that you may be forgiven for any act, no matter how serious. True, few Christians would want to forgive you for your second or third murder, but you may be repeatedly forgiven for lesser sins, since you are “only human.” This concept greatly weakens the spiritual impulse to lead an ethical life. It has even become commonplace now for criminals to “find Jesus” while in jail for their crimes. Certainly part of the reason is to impress their parole boards.

The danger of this principle becomes apparent when it is applied to the real world. What if a judge, when presented with an armed robber who had been found guilty, accepted the criminal’s totally sincere apology, his protestation of guilt and weakness, and his promise to sin no more. If that judge then forgave the criminal and let him go free, I doubt that he would remain on the bench for long. Yet that is precisely what occurs in the religious context. Murderers are forgiven of their sins so that they may enter into Heaven, just as the criminal on the cross at Calvary was promised a place in Paradise.

For the pagan, such conduct is inconceivable. The first principle of Zeus is that of justice. If a wrong is done, it must be repaid in some manner. (This concept is exemplified by lists of how you repay a specific crime as demonstrated by the laws of the Welsh king, Hywel Dda...) Within the polytheistic or pagan concept of the world there is no forgiveness. The divine neither forgives nor forgets. The gods may take into account mitigating circumstances in their retribution for your acts, but each act and each day is counted on the scales of justice. You are forgiven nothing.

Fortunately, this pagan principle is still the one that informs our legal system, which has remained largely free of the concept of forgiveness. But imagine the effect of this pagan morality on a society. What might be the result if we all believed that each of us is responsible for our actions, if each believed in a just, merciful, yet unforgiving god? The criminal might even know that he would eventually be called to count for each action by an unerring judge. Viewed in these terms, pagan morality is quite conservative. Yet it shares this conservative viewpoint with our legal system. And there is also a significant social implication of assuming that all can be forgiven. Forgiveness creates the single most pernicious social doctrine in Christianity – a lack of responsibility...

What chance do we have for responsibility for our actions if we cannot stand against the evil impulses placed there by the Devil? Remarkably, this simplistic defense, that one is unable to resist an impulse if it were Satanically inspired, still finds credence

among a large part of the Western population. It is often the position of literalistic Christians that we are helpless against the devil without the protection of the church and its god. (Satanic inspiration has even been used as a defense by ministers who have misused church funds or used their position to gain sexual favors.) Through the mechanism of satanic influence, all manners of people are forgiven and accepted by the church, even when punished by the law.

Now, Dear, let me show you some more-specific examples of such stupidity. Many of the following quotations are from Aiken's collection.⁸ To some of these quotations (all of which I've put in *italics*) I've added a few notes [in brackets] in hopes of stimulating you to ask yourself (in all cases): "These dictates are based on what data?"

Moses (*Exodus 22, 18*): "*Thou shall not suffer a witch to live.*" [And what, pray tell, is a "witch"? Someone who turns sticks into snakes (as Moses allegedly did)? Someone who can make it rain frogs (as Moses allegedly did)? What is the reliability of the data supporting the accomplishment of such "supernatural stunts"? How many thousands of innocent people were subsequently murdered for being "witches" – and based on what data?!]

Muhammad (*Koran 2.6–7*): "*Surely those who disbelieve, it being alike to them whether you warn them, or do not warn them, will not believe. Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great punishment for them.*" [In this case, not only is there the question "What data support this pronouncement?" but also the question "Where's the logic?" I admit to the logic of "those who disbelieve... will not believe" (☹), but if Allah made them disbelievers (e.g., not believing Muhammad's claim to have been visited by an angel), then why should there be "great punishment for them"? Allegedly it was Allah who "set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing" and "a covering over their eyes"; therefore, if anyone is to be punished for their not being "believers", then punish Allah – or Muhammad (and all subsequent Imams and Ayatollahs) for suggesting punishment for the disbelievers, because obviously such religious leaders are promoting something that is against Allah's will: Allah made some people unbelievers! And yet, how many millions of disbelievers, who were obeying Allah's will, were subsequently murdered by Muslims?!]

Pope Innocent III (1161–1216): "*Consequently, in the name of God Almighty* [talk about a "power grab"; when the Pope speaks he's speaking on behalf of God!], *by the authority of the Apostles Saints Peter and Paul, and by our Own* [authority], *We* [capitalized, because it's the "royal we"!], *reprove and condemn this Charter* [the Magna Carta], *under pain of anathema* [i.e., cursed and excommunicated from the Church]. *We forbid the King to observe it* [the Pope claimed authority over the King of England – which I suppose is "no big deal", given that the Pope claims he speaks for God!] *or the barons to demand its execution. We declare the Charter null and of*

⁸ At <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~aiken/>.

no effect, as well as all the obligations contracted to confirm it. It is Our wish that in no case should it have any effect.” [And thereby, if this damnable Pope had his way, the British people and subsequently people around the world would never have broken free from the king’s tyranny.]

Pope Eugenius IV, *Bull. Rom. Pont., V.67*, 1442 (50 years before Columbus discovered America): *“We decree and order that from now on, AND FOR ALL TIME, Christians shall not eat or drink with Jews; nor admit them to feasts, nor cohabit with them, nor bathe with them. Christians shall not allow Jews to hold civil honors over Christians, or to exercise public office in the State. Jews cannot be merchants, Tax Collectors, or agents in the buying and selling of the produce and goods of Christians, nor their Procurators, Computers, or Lawyers in matrimonial matters, nor Obstetricians; nor can they have association or partnership with Christians. No Christian can leave or bequeath anything in his last Will and testament to Jews or their congregations. Jews are prohibited from erecting new synagogues. They are obliged to pay annually a tenth part of their goods and holdings. Against them Christians can testify, but the testimony of Jews against Christians in no case is of any value. All and every single Jew, of whatever sex and age, must everywhere wear the distinct dress and known marks by which they can be evidently distinguished from Christians. They cannot live among Christians, but in a certain street, separated and segregated from Christians, and outside which they cannot under any pretext have houses.”* [And all because the majority of Jews saw that Christianity was a gigantic hoax, based on essentially zero data (as I’ll try to show you in **Yx**). And incidentally, Dear, there is the terrible irony that Christianity was originally promoted by some crazed Jews, such as the “Saints” Paul and Peter, and of course it’s a religion that the clerics claim (unjustifiably) was started by Jesus, a Jew – which I guess is why Jesus “cannot live among... but [only] separated and segregated from Christians”!]

Martin Luther [the “spiritual father” of all non-Catholic (or “Protestant”) Christian sects (and therefore of Mormonism)], in *On the Jews and Their Lies*, 1543: *“He [the clerics’ Jesus] did not call them [the Jews] Abraham’s children, but a ‘brood of vipers’ (Matthew 3, 7) [Although the data show only that this is what Matthew (a Jew) wrote, not what Jesus actually said!]. Oh, that was too insulting for the noble blood and race of Israel, and they declared, ‘He has a demon’ (Matthew 11, 18). Our Lord also calls them a ‘brood of vipers’ [Again: that’s only what Matthew wrote; what Jesus said, we’ll almost certainly never know]; furthermore in John 8, 39–44, he [and note that this ‘he’ is John, not Jesus!] states: ‘If you were Abraham’s children ye would do what Abraham did... You are of your father the devil.’ It was intolerable to them to hear that they were not Abraham’s but the devil’s children, nor can they bear to hear this today.”* [Perhaps because not a single shred of data has ever been provided to demonstrate either that Jesus said any such thing or that such a statement has any basis in fact. In particular, as far I know, vipers (i.e., snakes) are unable to impregnate human females – although there’s no doubt that Luther thought they could!]

Pope Leo XIII (1810–1903), *Great Encyclical Letters*, 16: “It is quite unlawful to demand, defend, or to grant unconditional freedom of thought, or speech, of writing or worship, as if these were so many rights given by nature to man.” [Do tell! And whose “law” is this? God’s or yours?!

Pope Pius IX, 1866: “Slavery itself, considered as such in its essential nature, is not at all contrary to the natural and divine law, and there can be several just titles of slavery and these are referred to by approved theologians and commentators of the sacred canons... It is not contrary to the natural and divine law for a slave to be sold, bought, exchanged or given.” [And who, pray tell, gave “theologians and commentators of the sacred canons” authority to identify “natural and divine law” – or did they just grab this authority?!]

Mormon Elder Boyd K. Packer, *The Improvement Era*, June 1945, p. 354: “Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the ‘prophets, seers, and revelators’ of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy [i.e., “the renunciation of a religious or political belief or allegiance”]. Lucifer... wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to ‘do their own thinking’.... When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan – it is God’s plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy.” [And anyone who says that 16 rather than 17 angels can dance on the head of a pin, or anyone who says that all invisible elephants are any color than pink, better...]

Carl Sagan (1934–1996), *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, p. 325: “When the movie *Jurassic Park* was shown in Israel, it was condemned by some Orthodox rabbis because it accepted evolution and because it taught that dinosaurs lived a hundred million years ago – when, as is plainly stated at every Rosh Hashonhan and every Jewish wedding ceremony, the Universe is less than 6,000 years old.”

Sheik Abdel-Aziz Ibn Baaz, Supreme religious authority, Saudi Arabia, Muslim religious edict, 1993: “The earth is flat, and anyone who disputes this claim is an atheist who deserves to be punished.” [What more need be said? What more can be said?!]

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Muhammad Hashemi Rafsanjani, as reported on 1 August 1994 in the Iranian newspaper *Ibar*, after meeting with special envoys from Pope John Paul II: “The future war is between the religious and the materialists. Collaboration between religious governments in support of outlawing abortion is a fine beginning for the conception of collaboration in other fields.”

And for my final example, Dear, let me quote from an article by Jerald and Sandra Tanner entitled “Death of the Anti-Black Doctrine [of Mormonism]”,

which is available online⁹ and which appeared originally in *The Salt Lake City Messenger*, Issue No. 41, December 1979:

President Brigham Young [the second president of the Mormon Church] emphatically affirmed that blacks could not hold the Priesthood until AFTER the resurrection:

“Cain slew his brother... and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin... How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it, until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam’s children are brought up to that favorable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood.”
(*Journal of Discourses, Vol. 7, pp. 290-291*)

“When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of God, and of being redeemed from the four quarters of the earth, and have received their resurrection from the dead, then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity... he is the last to share the joys of the kingdom of God.” (*Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 143*)

The First Presidency of the Church reaffirmed Brigham Young’s teaching in 1949... and in 1967, N. Eldon Tanner, was quoted as saying:

“The church has no intention of changing its doctrine on the Negro,” N. Eldon Tanner, counselor to the First President told SEATTLE during his recent visit here. “Throughout the history of the original Christian church, the Negro never held the priesthood. There’s really nothing we can do to change this. It’s a law of God.” (*Seattle Magazine, December 1967, p. 60*)

The reader will remember that when the public began to find out the real truth about Watergate, President Nixon’s press secretary Ron Ziegler said that statements which had previously been made were now “inoperative.” What he really meant, of course, was that the past denials were untrue. Like the early statements concerning Watergate, the pronouncements and revelations that Mormon leaders used to support the anti-black doctrine have now become “inoperative.” Although he did not use this word, the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie recently conceded that the old teachings concerning blacks were given “without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world”:

“I would like to say something about the new revelation relative to our taking the priesthood to those of all nations and races... There are statements in our literature by the early brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same

⁹ For example, it’s at http://www.xmission.com/~country/reason/black_2.htm.

things, and people write me letters and say, ‘You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?’ And all I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever [which, Dear, actually should be “whosoever”, because it’s the subject and not the object of the phrase] has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.

“We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. We have now had added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness and all the views and all the thoughts of the past. They don’t matter any more.

“It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year [1978]. It is a new day and a new arrangement, and the Lord has now given the revelation that sheds light into the world on this subject. As to any slivers of light or any particles of darkness of the past, we forget about them.” (from *All Are Alike Unto God*, by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie of the Council of the Twelve).

And similarly, Dear, let me acknowledge that I was wrong: all invisible flying elephants are purple, just as you said, all along! But maybe I shouldn’t be so flippant – because of what has occurred, what’s still occurring, and what might yet occur.

Now, Dear, I know (I know, I know, I know...) that much could be written about the terrible harm that religions have caused (and are still causing) so many groups of people. A huge amount has already been written: thousands of books describe horrible policies promoted by religions, including intolerance, suppression of knowledge (and therefore all the “witch hunts”, torture chambers, and murders of the Inquisition), discrimination against women, racism, slavery, and wars. I’ll review some of this history in the excursions **Yx**. In the subsequent two chapters and in the **X**-chapters, I’ll address some of the current problems and possible ways to avoid future problems that religions cause various groups of people. Here, toward ending this chapter, I want “just” to add some “words of caution”, which I’ll summarize as follows. Dear, if ever you seek to understand some stupid religious policy, then take care and dig deeply, because the roots of some of these stupid policies are as old as humanity – and they’re buried deeply in primitive minds.

* Go to other chapters *via*

To illustrate what I mean, I could provide many examples, including religious policies supporting “family values”, “law and order”, altruism, and so on, as well as religious policies against a variety of behavior, most frequently (it would seem) dealing with sex, e.g., against sodomy, adultery, homosexuality, etc. In each case, if you try to identify the origin of the advocated policy, I guarantee you that you’ll need to dig deeply. In **Yx**, I’ll illustrate some of the “deep roots” of religious policies related to “law and order” (trying to explain what I mean by “the law lie”); here, to try to show you what I mean by “deep roots”, let me at least give you an outline of the origin of some religious policies related to racism (such as the Mormon’s “anti-black” doctrine, outlined above).

For example, suppose you wanted to understand the origin of the horrible religious policies that led to Nazi attempts to exterminate the Jewish “race” (a nonsensical concept), resulting in the murders of approximately six million men, women, and children of Jewish descent. At the outset, you might wonder if this horror was the result of a religious policy. Then, you might be convinced that it was, especially if you read statements by Hitler such as: “Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.”

You then might wonder: where did Hitler get such crazy ideas that, by murdering Jews, he was “fighting for the work of the Lord” and “acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator”? Well, at least a partial answer to that question is obvious, for example, by re-reading the above quotations from Martin Luther and Pope Eugenius IV, which were written approximately 500 years before Hitler’s henchmen adopted procedures to execute such policies (e.g., by building gas chambers). Further, it’s relatively easy to see how these religious dictators stumbled onto such a horrid policy. For example, see all the references in the quotation from Martin Luther to the Bible’s *Gospel According to Matthew*.

Then, however, it’s not so easy to determine where the cleric who wrote *The Gospel According to Matthew* obtained his idea. If you dig, however, you can find suggestions such as the following, from Chapter XXVIII of Graham Lawrence’s impressive book referenced earlier in this chapter (on line at <http://freespace.virgin.net/graham.lawrence/index.htm> and to which I’ve added a few notes in brackets).

It is only in Matthew's Gospel that Pilate washes his hands as a formal sign of his innocence of the blood of Jesus. Pilate would never have done this: it was a Jewish custom (*Deuteronomy 21, 6–9*) and its significance would be appreciated by Matthew's Jewish readers. It is a powerful irony that this particularly Jewish Gospel [i.e., Matthew's gospel], as part of the combined processes of shifting responsibility from Romans to Jews and explaining the destruction of Jerusalem [both thereby attributed to the death of the clerics' Jesus], is the one that expresses Jewish guilt so intensely: "And the people, to a man, shouted back, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'" (*Matthew 27, 25*)

Those terrible words, the collective confession of Jews to the murder of Christ, would be given divine authority by becoming accepted [or maybe better would be the word 'adopted'] as scripture by the Christian Church. Matthew himself saw this as another prophecy, of the dreadful destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the year 70 [CE, destroyed by the Romans – before Matthew wrote his "gospel" and therefore a "prophecy" only in hindsight!] As far as he [Matthew] was concerned, although the Jews had rejected Jesus, their punishment for this was in the past [i.e., Matthew was faking the story about Jesus to "explain" why the Jews needed to suffer the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, all of which was "history" for Matthew; he wasn't proposing that Jews would endlessly suffer, as was later misinterpreted by all the Popes, Martin Luther, Hitler, and so on!]. Matthew expected the world to end and Jesus to return: he could have had no idea that his words would be used to justify anti-Semitism and cruel persecutions down through the centuries.

If this interpretation by Lawrence is correct, then it certainly does reveal a "terrible irony": words in a fictitious story written by a Jew, for Jewish readers and about a Jew named Jesus, is used by non-Jews to "justify" the slaughter of six million Jews. And if you should object, Dear, saying something similar to "People couldn't be that stupid!", then I'm sorry that I would feel obliged to respond, "Show me the data!"

But, Dear, if you want to get to the roots of the horrible religious policy of racism, you'll need to dig deeper. At the next depth, to uncover the roots of the racism in Mormonism and Christianity, you would need to get past the fabrications (i.e., lies) of the New Testament (NT) to the fabrications (i.e., lies) of the Old Testament (OT).¹⁰ In particular, in the next "layer of lies", there are astounding conspiracies that led to the creation of the OT (i.e., the Torah of the Jews) in about 400 BCE. In Yx I'll show you some of these conspiracies (apparently perpetrated by the King of Persia, Darius "the Great" and his "flunky", the Jewish "high priest" Ezra); here, let me try to summarize in a single paragraph.

¹⁰ Incidentally, Dear, one of the enlightened policies promoted by Muhammad was the rejection of racism – which may be the reason so many Blacks in this country have abandoned Christianity for Islam.

The conspiracy of fabricating the OT was not quite so brazen as Rigdon's fabrication known as the Book of Mormon (BoM), which was fabricated with absolutely zero information about Ancient America! Also, it wasn't quite so brazen as the "Gospels" about Jesus, which were based on an amalgamation of astrology, "pagan" religions, and maybe the manipulations of the sayings of possible wandering Jewish "faith healer" by the name of Jesus, possibly Jesus ben Pandera. And although details are now lost in history, what Ezra and co-conspiring Jewish clerics apparently did (after they adopted the Persian religion when they were in Babylon) was to fabricate the OT by manipulating the myths of the Hebrews into a form to convince the Israelites that they should abandon their old "mountain god" El (as in IsraEL) for the new Persian god (whom they wouldn't name, but who, subsequently, has been called Yahweh or Jehovah). As a part of this "religious conversion", Ezra and co-conspirators fabricated the now-well-known stories about Noah, Abraham, Israel, Joseph, Moses, and others (based on scraps of information contained in various myths, stories, and songs). And more to the point that I'm trying to make, these fabrications include substantial racism.

For example, Ezra and co-conspirators have their fictitious god say to Abraham (*Genesis 12, 1 and 22, 17*):

I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you and make your name so great that it shall be used in blessings... All the families on earth will pray to be blessed as you are blessed... Your descendants shall possess the cities of their enemies. All nations on earth shall pray to be blessed as your descendants are blessed.

Similarly, Ezra and co-conspirators fabricated that Moses said to the Israelites, on behalf of the fictitious god (*Deuteronomy 7, 1–6*):

When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you are entering to occupy, and drive out many nations before you... when the LORD your God delivers them into your power and you defeat them, you must put them to death. You must not make a treaty with them or spare them. You must not intermarry with them... For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

And thus, Dear, see the horror of it all – and the culpability of the clerics (both Christian and Jewish) in "the Nazi crimes against humanity". Rather than preaching about the superficiality of all racial distinctions, rather than teaching about "the brotherhood of all mankind" (as did Muhammad,

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Socrates, Buddha, and Confucius), Christian and Jewish (and Mormon) clerics taught racism. For ~2,000 years, Christian clerics have been teaching their followers not only that Jews were members of an “inferior race” but also that they were guilty of the murder of Jesus. But for ~2400 years, the Jewish clerics have been teaching their followers that they are “God’s chosen people” and that they have not only the right but also the duty to exterminate “inferior races”. Thus, in a horrible way, Hitler’s mentor was Moses (or, more accurately, Ezra and co-conspirators who fabricated the Old Testament).

But again, Dear, if you want to get to the roots of racism, you need to dig still deeper. If you do, you’ll find that it wasn’t the Jews (or Ezra or Moses) who started the idea that they were their god’s “chosen people”. For example, in the 1913 book by Edward S. Ellis and Charles F. Horne entitled *The Story of the Greatest Nations and the World’s Famous Events, vol. 1* (excerpts from which are available on-line) you can find the following in the section entitled The History of Ancient Assyria:

ASSYRIA, a daughter-land born of [Ancient] Babylon, thrust aside the mother city and for a brief time held control of the Euphrates valley. Assyria has long stood in history as the symbol of ferocity and brutal cruelty. This view is enforced not only by the lamentations in the Bible, the outcry of the stricken Hebrews, but also by the boastful inscriptions of the Assyrians themselves, and by the desolation which they left everywhere behind them.

The Assyrians were a Semitic race [as were the Hebrews], and, like most of the Semites, they had attained to the religious idea of a single, all-controlling god. They called this god Asshur; and as did the Hebrews with Jehovah, the Assyrians regarded themselves as *their god’s chosen people*. [Italics added.] Not only do they ascribe all their victories to Asshur’s favor, but they attribute to his command all their hideous barbarities. In the inscriptions of their conquering kings we read constantly that they tore out the tongues of thousands of prisoners “by Asshur’s bidding”, or they impaled masses of men on stakes and left them to die in agony because Asshur had ordered the extinction of “that rebellious nation.”

It was the Assyrians (“God’s chosen people”) who overran the Israelites in about 720 BCE, and about 300 years later, while writing the Old Testament, Ezra and co-conspirators claimed that they, the Israelites, were “God’s chosen people.”

Yet, Dear, still deeper digging is needed. For example, to see some of the “inscriptions” mentioned in the quotation above, search on the internet for

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“the Inscription of Tiglath Pileser I”, who was king of the Assyrians in c. 1100 BCE. Similar claims of “doing God’s will” were made by the Egyptian king (or pharaoh) Thothmes III (who lived from about 1480 to 1425 BCE, i.e., a few hundred years before Moses allegedly lived). These inscriptions can be found on the internet using search words such as “Thothmes II” plus the phrases “Hall of Columns” and/or “Temple of Amen at Karnak” and/or “The Discourse of Amen-Ra, Lord of Thrones”. For example, in this “Discourse” the God Amen-Ra reportedly informs Thothmes: “I give thee victory and power over all the nations. I have spread the fear of thee throughout all lands, and thy terror unto the limits of the four props of heaven.” In an earlier chapter, I already showed you similar claims by King Hammurabi of Babylon, who predated Abraham. Therefore, Dear, certainly the Israelites didn’t “invent” such crazy, racist ideas; they were just foolish enough to maintain what for most of the past ~2500 years was the only readily available record of such horrible policies.

But to discern the origin of racism, Dear, you would need to go beyond even the oldest written records (and other records of human brutality) to attempt to understand “the herd instinct”, seeking “safety in numbers”, a common instinct of all “social” animals. In addition (or otherwise!), you can just watch the behavior of little kids. Thus, one group of little kids (led by a would-be Moses) will yell to another group (in a sing-song fashion): “We’re better than you are!” To which the other group, led by a would-be Hitler, will yell back: “Oh no you’re not; we’re better than you!” A good illustration of such horrid behavior is found in the behavior of street gangs in many “modern” American cities. When such children grow up (at least in stature), the only difference is that they claim that their respective gods support their childish views.

Let me go into that idea in more detail, because thereby, maybe you’ll not only see it more clearly, but see even more. First, apparently inherent with the formation of essentially any group is that group members gain feelings of superiority over other groups. I assume that this feeling is essentially instinctive; I assume that people (and most other animals) feel more secure when they assemble into groups – which, I expect, is why many people (and, maybe especially, many women) desire to join groups. You can observe (and you can participate in) this “claim to superiority” in many ways: associated with inter-school rivalries (e.g., the displays of “school spirit” at sporting events), intercity rivalries (“city pride”), interstate rivalries (e.g., at professional games), and out to an including international competitions

(from sporting events to wars). Viewed as an example of “group dynamics”, such rivalries are common, but they can be dangerous – and in a way, it’s disgraceful that our schools stimulate “school spirit”. For contrast, compare Socrates’ statement “I am not an Athenian or a Greek but a citizen of the world” and consider Einstein’s assessment “Nationalism is an infantile disease, the measles of mankind.”

When religion is added, “group loyalty” degenerates from an “infantile disease” to a plague. It’s one level of infantile idiocy to claim that your group is “better” than some other group (primarily because it’s your group, e.g., your street gang, your city, your religion, your nation...); it degenerates to an adult idiocy when group members claim that their god agrees with their assessment that their group is better. “We’re God’s chosen people” claims some group of lunatic Egyptians, Assyrians, or Jews, to which there are variations of the response given by Hitler:

What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people, the sustenance of our children and the purity of our blood, the freedom and independence of the fatherland, so that our people may mature for the fulfillment of the mission allotted it by the creator of the universe.

I’d encourage you, Dear, to view all religions from such a perspective. As far as I know (and I admit that I don’t know enough about many religions, including Hinduism), every religious group not only adopts the attitude that “We’re the good guys” (and simultaneously, either implicitly or explicitly, that all others are “the bad guys”) but also adopts the attitude that “We’re God’s chosen people.” Certainly it’s true for the Mormons, the Baptists, the Pentecosts, the Methodists, the Lutherans, the Catholics, the Muslims, and the Jews. And, Dear, it’s all so sick – and it has led (and continues to lead) to an uncountable number of horrors. To illustrate, the resulting ferocity of religious rancor, there’s the remark by Julian, who was the Emperor of Rome for two years, 25 years after Emperor Constantine (who deified Jesus): “No wild beasts are as hostile to men as Christian sects in general are to one another.”

There is, moreover, a startling (and sickening) “dynamic” of a huge number of groups: hate for their enemies provides glue to help them stick together! You can find thousands of examples of this “dynamic”, from herds of animals threatened by predators, to Americans previously strengthened by anti-communism and now strengthened by anti-terrorism. In fact, members of many groups gain strength not only from hating their enemies but also

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from their enemies' hate – which leads to the stimulating question: Would so many Jewish people be so successful if they hadn't felt the need to overcome Christian "love"?! I wonder if the Jewish people would still be even identifiable if Christians hadn't maintained their identification of them.

An example "closer to where you live", Dear, is for the Mormons. To illustrate, let me quote what one of the first Mormons, John Corrill, wrote in 1839 (less than a decade after the formation of the religion) in his *History of the Mormons*. I've added some notes in brackets and the italics; you can find the complete book on the internet.

Men of influence in the [Mormon] Church have, at different times, turned against it, become its violent enemies, and tried to destroy it, but generally without success. If Smith, Rigden [Rigdon], and others of the leaders had managed wisely and prudently, in all things, and manifested truly a Christian spirit, it would have been very difficult to put them down. But their imprudence and miscalculations, *and manifest desire for power and property*, have opened the eyes of many, and did more to destroy them than could possibly have been done otherwise. *My opinion is that if the Church had been let alone by the citizens, [then the Mormons] would have divided and subdivided so as to have completely destroyed themselves and their power, as a people, in a short time.*

All of which is just another example of what I mentioned an earlier chapter (C), as an example of the "interconnectedness" of opposites: *Black supports White; every "in-group" needs its "out-group"*.

Similarly, Dear, you would need to dig deeply to find the sources of the common mistreatment of women in essentially all religions – some details of which I'll get to in the X-chapters and which is so common that it lends support for the thesis that the prime purpose of most organized religions is the subjugation of women by men! In turn, this is consistent with the possibility (which I mentioned in **Ix**) that the prime goal of the clerics of the original patriarchal religions in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia (leading, much later, to Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, etc.) seems to have been to grab land and power from the earlier "Mother-Earth" religions, which were controlled by women. In turn, this "power grab" was consistent with the importance of land (which the women probably worked) and the unimportance of fathers (except as studs).

As just one of many examples, consider how the authors of the Bible concocted an "explanation" for the pain women experience when bringing

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new life into this world. That the pains were real was abundantly clear. But rather than consider the possibility that the cause was that the baby's brain (and therefore head) was so large, these damnable, power-mongering clerics concocted the hideous story that the pain was punishment for the evil of all females – derived (in the Bible's twisted tale) from Eve's desire to eat fruit from, of all things, the tree of knowledge! If women had stayed dumb they wouldn't know pain! How about if I respond to such stupidity by saying that this is proof, beyond doubt, either that there is no God or that, if there is, he is the epitome of evil. For if there were a God who was "just", he would immediately eliminate from existence all humans who perpetrated such evil.

As another example, consider again the horrible story about Sodom and Gomorrah. Lott offered to give his daughter to be raped by strangers! What a despicable character! As I think I wrote before: if there were guns, Lott should have been shot. Instead, look who was punished and for what: his wife, for her curiosity! So, women of the world, watch out: according to the Bible, the penalty for seeking knowledge is pain and the penalty for being curious is death! Meanwhile, the rest of us moan: if only the people of the world could live in peace, if only the 'might' in "might makes right" would mean 'intelligence' (consistent with the Sumerian proverb, from more than 4,000 years ago, "strength cannot keep pace with intelligence"), then the (physically) "weaker sex" could again be equal to men (or, if their intellect and other skills permit, then women should take their "rightful" role as superior to men). But the men fight on, like animals maintaining that the 'might' in "might means right" means "physical might", thereby keeping their women subjugated.

But all such details aside, Dear, I hope you see enough to take care. Thus, if ever you seek to identify origins of evils such as racism, subjugation of women, slavery, and so on, then be aware that, almost certainly, such evils are as old as humanity (and even older), in some cases probably instinctive, originally adopted as tactics for survival by wandering groups of hunters and gatherers – and animals! On the other hand, if you seek to identify the hideous influences of religions in perpetuating such evils, then I would encourage you to investigate the harm religions have done (and continue to do) by suppressing knowledge and by attempting to maintain the status quo.

And again, Dear, "I know, I know, I know, I know..." that religions aren't the sole source of the world's problems. As a result, writing these chapters has caused me substantial difficulty, because what I'm trying to describe is

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(in the language of science) usually a “second- or higher-order effect”. The “first-order effect” is that some sick public policy (suppression of knowledge, subjugation of women, intolerance, racism, slavery, or whatever) surfaces and grows, like a weed, whose roots can be very deep. Then what happens, as a “higher-order effect” and maintaining the analogy, is that religions get involved – like some stupid gardener who fertilizes the weeds!

Correspondingly, Dear, when I encounter sick social policies, my “first-order complaint” isn’t usually against religions but against stupidity. In my mind, I keep returning to Socrates’ brilliant assessment: “There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.” And “I know, I know, I know, I know...” that there are some good ideas in most religions, such as trying to help families, trying to promote kindness, trying to relieve suffering, and so on, and I’m certainly not opposed to religious efforts to organize people to help one another. But fundamentally, all organized religions are organized around the idea that the universe (and therefore any society) is under the control of various giant Jabberwocks in the sky. Therefore, organized religion is organized ignorance – and I’m unalterably opposed to ignorance. The consequences of such organized ignorance have been (and continue to be) absolutely horrible, some more of which I’ll show you in the next chapter. But meanwhile, Dear, why don’t you get some exercise?