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Theocracy Alert

On “sin” and “God,” creationism and Pat Robertson

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August 26, 2005—A banner and a placard greeted students returning to Roseville High School in northern California. The banner read “Homosexuality Is Sin.” The placard read “Gays Hate God.” An [article](#) in the local media reported that the banner and the placard were on a “regional tour” of public schools.

“This is a sad day here in Roseville when you have signs that are trying to educate our children in high school to hate,” Roseville resident Maria Trevizo said.” Ms. Trevizo was correct, but understated the case.

Aside from the “hate gays” campaign, the Christian Right is also intent on having the Genesis myth taught as “alternative science” in public school science classes. Ms. Trevizo and all women should be concerned. Evolution means men and women are equal; creationism means women are inherently inferior to men. That’s made clear in Genesis and confirmed by the apostle Paul in First Timothy when he admonished Christians “suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” because “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.” A woman *caused* original sin. “They” cannot be trusted after such a “sin against God.”

The expression “sin against God” has always seemed totally inappropriate. The psychology and emotions attributed to the “God” in such a statement are human, not Divine. Surely Divinity would not suffer from the worst of human emotions such as being offended to the point of taking violent and lethal retribution. And surely Divinity would not act as scatologically as the sin-obsessed, megalomaniacal “God” of the Bible:

If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. (Malachi 2: 2–3)

But then again, the Genesis myth that started it all echoes other creation myths. The original Greek gods, the Titans (Cronus), had a nasty habit of eating their children. That’s mirrored in Genesis when a mean-spirited, all-knowing god creates two humans, sets them up in a test he *knows* (being “all-knowing”) they’ll fail and when they do, he damns them for eternity thus creating the ultimate weapon of control: sin.

The concept of “original sin” was a winner for the leaders of the early Christian church in their quest for unlimited political power. It prompted St. Augustine—an architect of the new religious politics called “Christianity”—to decree that an unbaptized child is forever damned not because of anything s/he did, but because of original sin. Needless to say, more than a few rushed to baptism and helped fill the church’s coffers along the way. Would true Divinity condemn an innocent child?

Not likely. But the “God” of the monotheistic Western religions would. Philosopher Olaf Stapledon unmasked such a “God” in his 1937 work “Star Maker”:

I stood, confronted by the infinity that men call God, and conceived according to their human cravings (409).

For on the next cosmos he consciously projected something of his own percipience and will, ordaining that certain patterns and rhythms of quality should be the perceivable bodies of perceiving minds. Seemingly these creatures were intended to work together to produce the harmony which he had conceived for this cosmos; but instead, each sought to mould the whole cosmos in accordance with its own form. The creatures fought desperately, and with self-righteous conviction. When they were damaged, they suffered pain. This, seemingly, was something which the young Star Maker had never experienced or conceived. With rapt, surprised interest, and (as it seemed to me) with almost diabolical glee, he watched the antics and the suffering of his first creatures, till by their mutual strife and slaughter they had reduced their cosmos to chaos (416).

When my dream presented me with this crude, this barbaric figment, I was at first moved with horror and incredulity. How could the Star Maker, even in his immaturity, condemn his creatures to agony for the weakness that he himself had allotted them? How could such a vindictive deity command worship? (420)

After typing Stapledon's words, I got out my trusty copy of Walter W. Skeat's A Concise Etymological Dictionary to see how the words "sin" and "god" had evolved.

Part of "sin's" etymological history stems from Latin *sons* (stem *sont-*) that originally meant "real." As scholar Peter Stanford pointed out in "The Devil: A Biography," everything human was deemed a sin by religious authorities interested in political control. The "seven deadly sins" illustrate this. And again the evolution-creationism debate came to mind. For creationists, evolution is the original sin of secular humanists who believe in a concept not condoned by their "God": equality.

When I checked the word "god," the etymology led back to Sanskrit "*hu*, to sacrifice (to), whence *huta-*, one to whom sacrifice is offered." In other words, "God" is the thing living creatures are killed to honor. The Old Testament is filled with animal sacrifices ("burnt offerings," as they were called), and "God" did demand a human [sacrifice](#) from Abraham, but eventually settled for Isaac's foreskin. The final notation was most appropriate: "*Not allied with good, adj.*"

"Divine" came straight from Sanskrit *daiva-*, divine, albeit with major cultural and spiritual differences. What the original speakers of Sanskrit—the classical language of Hinduism—understood as "divinity" had nothing to do with the personified, anthropomorphic gods of early Western cultures or the single anthropomorphic, personified "God" that consumed them. That's clear from the different etymologies for "god" and "divinity." The entry's final notion—"See Tuesday"—clarified the difference:

Tuesday. Anglo-Saxon *Tiwes daeg*, the day of *Tiw*, the god of war + Icelandic *Tys-dagr*, the day of *Tyr*; Danish *Tirsdag*, Swedish *Tisdag*; Old High German *Zies tac*, the day of *Ziu*, god of war.

Like the word, it would seem "sin" is really a human concoction ascribed to a wrathful, sacrifice-demanding, mythic "God" conjured by political opportunists for their own mortal purposes. They, like their "God," profit from fear and hatred and enjoy war, murder and mayhem whether they're called "crusades" or "jihads."

That sounds like the "God" who chats with and directs televangelist and former presidential candidate Pat Robertson. With near perfect etymological timing, Robertson made headlines on *Tuesday*, after he'd called for the [assassination](#) of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

The "reasons" Robertson offered for this murder in the name of "God" and country were that Chavez was bent on exporting "Communism and Islamic extremism across the Americas." Aside from the fact that

“communism” has historically been staunchly atheistic, the last time I checked premeditated murder was a “sin,” but then again, “God” and his henchmen demand bloody sacrifices.

Robertson wholeheartedly agrees with the “Homosexuality Is Sin” banner and “Gays Hate God” placard on tour in northern California. He enthusiastically supports the teaching of creationism as science. And he was just repeating “God’s” words when he said of women who demand equality, “The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians.”

That Pat Robertson would openly call for the murder of a world leader is not that surprising. Also not surprising is the deafening silence of the leaders of the evangelical Christian Right who have not uttered one word of criticism. Their silence confirms their complicity.

The politicians that the Christian Right bankrolls have been dubiously silent as well. And for the Bush administration to say that Robertson was speaking “as a private citizen” was the epitome of absurdity. How many “private citizens” do you know who have their own syndicated TV shows, command a media empire the size of Robertson’s, and exercise the political clout he does?

The Philadelphia Inquirer polled its readers about Robertson’s comments. A common theme was summarized by this poignant posting:

In calling for the democratically elected leader of a foreign government to be assassinated Reverend Roberts is only spreading the message of love, compassion of his lord and savior Jesus Christ. Even though Jesus said, what you do to the least of these you do to me, even though his message was one of love, even though Jesus said, love thy neighbor as thyself, I guess Jesus made exceptions [for] Presidents of other countries who criticized the policies of the US. In these cases, the [ten] commandments, even though Robertson supports having them displayed in public schools and government buildings, simply do not apply. What the commandment really says is, “Thou shall not kill (unless Pat Robertson say to).”