



## “Ye Shall Be As Gods”<sup>1</sup>

DESPITE THE CLAIMS of various others, we would do well to admit that we have never been gods in the past, are not gods now, and will never become gods in the future. We are mortal human beings. Nevertheless, God reveals himself to our human reception and understanding.<sup>2</sup> It is in this context that we now address the paradox of God.

1. Unlike so-called paganism, neither Judaism, Christianity nor Islam believes in a multiplicity of gods or goddesses (polytheism). There is just One God (monotheism). “To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him. . . . [K]now therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other” (Deuteronomy 4:35, 39, RSV).

2. The One-and-Only God is not ultimate substance or primal essence (Greek, *ousia*). Nor is God final nothingness. Rather, God is ultimate relationality. This is a difficult and counterintuitive concept. Fortunately, the created universe provides a metaphor for relationality. All matter and energy in the universe emerge from the quantum field

(quantum vacuum) within the relational embrace of the cosmic space-time continuum. Every atom and molecule in the universe emerges from virtual photons (light waves/particles) that originate in quantum reality. Let us explain this further. Seventy-three percent of the observable universe is composed of the gaseous element, hydrogen.<sup>3</sup> An atom of hydrogen is composed of a central nuclear proton (positive electrical charge) and a planetary electron (negative electrical charge). Because opposite charges

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(positive and negative) attract one another, it would seem that all hydrogen atoms should instantaneously collapse into some form of non-atomic neutrality (e.g., neutron). Yet the proton and electron that constitute the hydrogen atom not only are held apart, but they exist only because a virtual photon oscillates between them. That virtual (relational) photon brought the proton and the electron into existence and continues to maintain them. If virtual (relational) photons should ever be extinguished, hydrogen atoms and all other elements would collapse and cease to exist!

3. As already implied, God as primal Relationality determined to extend his relationships. He determined to extend relationality to the “otherness” of the created order. In effect God said, “It is not good that I should be alone. I will make me a Creation to, for and with which I can further relate” (see Genesis 2:18).

4. God deliberately proceeded to create a universe with infinite possibilities. That infinite potential embraced both good and evil. “I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things” (Isaiah 45:6, 7).

5. God not only “created” good and evil; God also “knew” both good and evil. As the serpent in the Genesis story declared, “Ye shall be as gods, *knowing* good and evil” (Genesis 3:5, italics supplied). Here the English word “knowing” is translated from the Hebrew *yada*, which is an explicit term for covenantal or relational knowledge. The meaning of the serpent’s expression is twofold. On one hand, “good” is the manifestation, expression and fulfillment of true relationality – of “otherness.” On the other hand, “evil” is the misrepresentation, rejection and/or obstruction of relationality – of “otherness.” All evil – whether naturocentric (in nature), anthropocentric (involving mankind) or theocentric (against God) – is designed to manipulate, subordinate and/or eliminate “others” and ultimately reduce “otherness” to death and nothingness.<sup>4</sup>

6. According to the Genesis story, God alerted Creation (“Adam”) to the existence of both the good and the evil that he himself had “created.” “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die’” (Genesis 2:16, 17, RSV).

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7. The ultimate question is, Why would God deliberately introduce the potential for evil – the elimination of relationality – into his own universe? Let us now attempt to answer this fundamental question.

a. God is ultimate Relationality. God has always had the potential, the right and the freedom for either affirming or denying his own relational existence.

b. Since relationality is a *mutual* reality that requires “otherness,” representative “others” created by divine Relationality likewise must have, at some point, the right to affirm or deny their own existence. Relationality cannot exist without mutuality. Mutuality, therefore, is a synonym for co-existence.

c. God thus extended to representative “others” the right to affirm or reject co-existence. The existence of evil therefore reflects God’s determination to grant to the universe the freedom, responsibility and infinite possibilities with which he himself is endowed.

d. In a universe with infinite possibilities, it is far better for evil to be manifest at the beginning of creation rather than at the end. If evil were reserved for the end, the universe would be destined to live in virtually eternal turmoil and trepidation.

e. But not only did the Creator-God “create” and covenantally “know” evil; he also assured Creation of full and eternal insurance coverage (*kippurim*) against the existence and consequences of evil. This coverage involved his own covenantal acceptance and bearing of evil, his own suffering from evil, and his own final extermination of evil.

f. For God to “create,” “know,” bear the consequences of, and finally eliminate evil enabled God and all Creation to be assured of their ultimate mutual and egalitarian relationality. God would be “Other” to all “others,” and everyone and, representatively, everything else would finally be free and responsible “others” to each “other” and to the “Otherness” of God.

8. A further conclusion needs to be drawn. The existence of evil is *not* the consequence of misbehavior by some other god or goddess or by some ethereal angel or material earthly creature. The existence of evil is the consequence of permission by God himself, according to his own design, that the entire universe and its infinite possibilities might ultimately be assured of eternal, unimpaired mutual relationality. In this context God first allowed the inauguration of naturocentric evil – physical catastrophes, biological mistakes and disasters, together with the death and extinction of living species. Then, soon after the emergence of

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mankind, language and subsequent metaphoric consciousness, there appeared both anthropocentric and theocentric evil.

## Models for the Human Manifestation of God

We will now address the historical appearance of evil under the emerging models for the human manifestation of God.

**1. Primitive God-Consciousness as a Metaphor for the Divine Presence.** About 12,000 years ago, after the emergence of language, God endowed mankind with a “god-consciousness” that involved the metaphoric visual and auditory presence of God.<sup>5</sup> This god-conscious presence, possessed in the human brain, was the first model for the “human manifestation of God.” From the beginning God realized that mankind could use this acquired god-consciousness not only to initiate relationality but also to curtail it. At the outset the gift of god-consciousness was “good.” It enabled mankind to domesticate plants and animals, to advance technology, and to develop settled civilizations.

**2. The Tower of Babel and the Inaugural Divinization of Mankind.** However, mankind soon took advantage of its metaphoric “god-consciousness” to move from a conscious *awareness* of God to the conscious *constitution* of itself as God. This is portrayed in the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. As the gift of god-consciousness began to wane, mankind is represented as attempting to build a tower that would reach to heaven in order to re-ligate (“re-ligion”) itself with divinity. This effort to possess or replace God was the second model for the “human manifestation of God.”

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name [*HaShem* = the Divine Name], lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. – Genesis 11:1-4.<sup>6</sup>

In the aftermath of this attempt of mankind to achieve divinity, God acted to “confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:9). Apparently, with the emergence of numerous languages, there was the appearance of a divergent many who thought themselves to be “gods.” These soon became violent rivals,

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making human warfare the order of the day.

### **3. Imperial Rulers/Political Power Structures and the Divinization of Mankind.**

Although mankind failed to reach the divine realm, it not only persisted in the evil of self-divinization but also proceeded to use this self-image to domesticate “others.” This involved divinized royalty and their political power structures on earth. These newly instituted power structures claimed divine authorization to employ the evil of human domestication, which led to enslavement, violence and death.

For example, imperial Egypt, which traced its origin back 4,000 years BCE, claimed that its ruling Pharaohs were the human manifestation of the high god, Atum-Ra. Egyptians believed that Atum-Ra descended from the heavens to the earth through a fourfold emanation, reaching the fifth level of this earth as Pharaoh. Subsequently, at death, Pharaoh was believed to return through four levels to Atum-Ra. Altogether, the four levels downward, the return level on this earth, and the four levels back to heaven constituted the ninefold Egyptian Ennead. Thus, for thousands of years the Egyptians divinized their political power structures. These divinized power structures represented the communal soul, the corporate representation of God, which the Egyptians termed the *ka* and which supposedly acted on behalf of all the people.<sup>7</sup> Such divinized power structures were the third model for the “human manifestation of God.”

After primitive “god-consciousness” was finally terminated about 1,000 BCE, mankind felt estranged and abandoned by God. In this vacuum the political power structures of Egypt and other world empires continued to divinize their political rulers. Pharaohs, kings and emperors were regarded as the human manifestation of the god(s), and their assumed god-consciousness was believed to re-ligate (“re-ligion”) mankind to God. It was in this context that the Pharaohs, for example, exercised “sovereign freedom” over their willing Egyptian “subjects.” It was also in this context that the Pharaohs domesticated the unwilling Habiru until the One-and-Only God, YHWH, liberated the Hebrews from their enslavement.

### **4. First-Temple Judaism and the Humanization of God.**

Under the leadership of Moses, the fourth model for the “human manifestation of God” emerged. God led the Habiru through the wilderness to their promised home. Meanwhile, God progressively revealed himself and his intentions to his people.

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At the burning bush God declared his name, YHWH, to Moses. That term is derived from the Hebrew verb *hayah*, which has the threefold meaning “to be,” “to become” and “to effect.” God uttered his name to Moses as *Ehyeh asher ehyeh*.<sup>8</sup> In this expression God said, in effect, “I will be, I will become, I will effect on behalf of ‘others.’” Using the wilderness Tabernacle and, later, the First Temple as metaphors, God revealed that he intended not only to be with his people, but also to compassionately become human himself and finally to

effect full and eternal humanity for all mankind.<sup>9</sup> This revelation of YHWH to his people overturned all prior and all subsequent assumptions that mankind itself must “be, become and effect” divinity! God never intended for mankind to become divine in order to be “re-ligions” to God. Rather, God intended that he would empty himself of divinity in order to become human, thus effecting full and eternal humanity on behalf of mankind! YHWH himself promised to constitute the human manifestation of God.

**5. The Priesthood and the Divinization of Mankind.** The revelation of YHWH as the ultimate anthropomorphic God has proved profoundly repugnant to mankind for over 3,000 years. While the original Aaronic (Zadokite) priests accepted YHWH as anthropomorphic, they believed that he had no interest or involvement in the earthly lives of mankind. For them embodied humanity was destined for non-existence in “Sheol.” There would be no resurrection from the dead and no afterlife – at least on earth. Rather than accepting the emergence of YHWH from his “being” in the Most Holy Place of the Temple in order to “become” human in the Holy Place and to “effect” mankind’s true humanity in the Outer Court, the Zadokites reversed the Temple metaphors. They saw the High Priest as moving from the Outer Court, through the Holy Place, and then through the Veil into the Most Holy Place. For them the Veil represented the original, archetypal Creation, while the Most Holy Place was the ethereal realm of heaven itself. As soon as he entered the Most Holy Place, the High Priest was in effect transformed from earthly humanity into the ethereal divinity of heaven itself.

This conviction of the Zadokite priests, developed during the First-Temple period, reappeared in the Persian era of the Second Temple and was adopted by the Zadokite descendants –

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the Sadducees – during the Hasmonean period.<sup>10</sup> Thus, while the Sadducees claimed to believe in an anthropomorphic God, they limited that God to the ethereal realm of heaven.<sup>11</sup> Only the High Priest himself could enter the Most Holy Place and there be transformed into

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divinity. Acting as the corporate person, the High Priesthood could subsequently emerge from the Most Holy Place and return to "earth." Those who unconditionally accepted the Zadokite High Priesthood and its ministry could then be included in the "corporate soul" and eventually become divinized as well. These Chosen Ones were eligible to enter heaven and be ethereally united with God and his Cosmic Oneness. For centuries this implicit belief constituted the backbone of the theocratic power structure of Second-Temple Judaism. The divinization of the Zadokite priesthood, with its alleged transformation to the ethereal realm and its divinized theocratic power structure, was the fifth model for the "human manifestation of God."

**6. Nihilism and the Divinization of Mankind.** The sixth model for the "human manifestation of God" emerged during the Hellenistic period of Second-Temple Judaism. This concept involved a rejection of the previous models that appeared after the mankind's loss of a possessive "god-consciousness" – ascendance to divinity, divinized politics, a humanized God, and a divinized theocratic power structure. The sixth model, involving nihilism and the divinization of mankind, emerged in the book of Ecclesiastes (250 BCE), pseudo-epigraphically attributed to Solomon:

"The answer to the question of the futility of life is answered . . . by the Jews in the form of a sermon by Solomon in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. . . .

"In the beginning of his sermon Solomon proclaims of the world ' . . . vanity, vanity, all is vanity.' (1:2) He goes on to support this weighty proclamation with dialectical evidence. First, this world is going nowhere in its patterns . . .

Generations come and generations go,  
But the sun sets, and hurries back to back  
To where it rises. The wind blows  
To the south and turns to the north;  
Round and round it goes ever returning on its  
Course. (1:4-6)

"And this pattern has been and will be handed through infinite successions of repetition . . .

What has been will be again, what has been  
Done will be done again; there is nothing  
New under the sun. (1:8)

“And yet in these eternally recurrent patterns that the world has found itself  
so set upon, we find neither repose nor satiety . . .

All things are wearisome, more than one can  
Say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor  
The ear its fill of hearing. (1:8)

“And,

All his days his work is pain and grief; even at  
Night his mind does not rest. (2:23)

“These verses offer themselves as a . . . dismal sort of syllogism: the world  
is going nowhere; it has always and will always be going nowhere; there is  
nothing that will satisfy anything in the world; therefore, ‘vanity, vanity, all is  
vanity.’

“This is surely a crushing epiphany for the preacher. It must also be noted  
that for Solomon there was no afterlife, there was no redemption of the toils of  
life in the afterlife. So in his . . . wisdom Solomon announces

And I declared the dead, who have already  
Died, are happier than the living, who are  
Still alive. But better than both is he who has  
Not yet been, who has not yet seen the evil under  
The sun. (4:2-3)

“Solomon decrees the greatest judgment that can be laid upon existence:  
that it is worse than nothingness.”<sup>12</sup>

In the judgment of such nihilism, God himself is reduced to nothingness  
and is therefore dead. “The heart of this philosophy . . . was ‘expressed most  
clearly by Nietzsche and by a character of Dostoyevsky in the phrase: “God is  
dead, therefore man becomes God and everything is possible.” ’ ”<sup>13</sup> Thus, in  
Hellenistic nihilism man himself becomes the human manifestation of God.

**7. Sectarian Judaism and the  
Divinization of Mankind.** The seventh  
model for the “human manifestation of  
God” emerged about the middle of the  
second century BCE, during the  
Hasmonean dynasty.<sup>14</sup> This dynasty  
originated with the Hebrew priest,  
Mattathias, and his five sons, who  
resisted the attempts of the Seleucid  
king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, to  
eliminate the Jewish religion and replace

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it with the worship of Zeus. The Hasidic scribes, who for centuries had participated in Israel's theocratic power structure by orally interpreting the Torah, joined this resistance. Finally, after a determined struggle, the Hasmonean family prevailed over the Seleucids.

Following the Hasmonean victory and ascendance to power, from the mid-second century BCE, the sectarian movements appeared within Judaism.<sup>15</sup> Two of these were the Sadducees and the Hasidim. Like the Sadducees, who were descendants of the Zadokite priesthood, the Hasidim were displaced by the Hasmoneans from theocratic power and separated themselves from the Hasmonean rulership. These Hasidic "separated" ones came to be called "Pharisees" (*Perushim* = separate).

While the Pharisees continued their Temple worship and submission to the existing power structures, their principal focus was on the earnest observance of Torah in a familial and informal communal setting – e.g., synagogue. Furthermore, through their connections with fellow Hebrews still residing in Persia/Parthia, the Pharisees adopted a number of significant Zoroastrian beliefs. These included the millennial coming of a world savior, a final battle between good and evil, an embodied resurrection from the dead, a final judgment of both the good and the evil, and an everlasting Paradise for the good and eternal oblivion for all evil. The Pharisees believed that Enoch, Moses and Elijah had passed an intermediate judgment and had achieved the ethereal realm of heaven. For those who were consistently obedient to all the Mosaic laws, Moses himself represented the communal soul in which they could all participate and through which they could ultimately achieve covenantal incorporation into divinity. This was the seventh model for the "human manifestation of God."

In adopting Zoroastrian beliefs, the Pharisees were convinced that the millennial appearance of the savior, the final battle, and the ultimate judgment were about to occur. This, combined with the absence of the legitimate Davidic kingship, the prophetic office and the Zadokite priesthood, led the Pharisees to author apocalyptic literature. "The term 'Apocalyptic' means 'uncovering' or 'revealing', and is used to refer to that broad movement which developed and flourished within [Judaism] from the 2nd century before the common era. . . . It describes a movement . . . that claimed that God had revealed to the writer the secrets of the imminent end of the world. Believers in this form of religion despaired of the way things were going in the world, and expected a redeemer figure who would act by the power of God to transform the world and judge its peoples (the 'Last Judgement' or 'Day of Judgment'); they expected the flesh to be transformed and looked for the resurrection of the body [with the exception of the Essenes]. Well-known texts are the Book of Daniel . . . and the non-canonical Books of Enoch."<sup>16</sup>

Sometime during the Hasmonean dynasty, a third sectarian movement emerged in Israel. The Essenes – a small but highly influential group – wholly detached themselves from the Temple and its services. “By the end of the first century B.C.E. their main group was located on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea region, and was organized as a quasi-monastic order. Other branches of the order were scattered throughout the countryside. According to Philo the Essenes were never numerous; in his day they numbered about 4,000. The members of the Brotherhood lived in monastic communities from which, with few exceptions, women were excluded. They lived austere lives, supporting themselves by manual labor, generally agricultural, and holding everything in common ownership. They abhorred slavery. The religious outlook of the Essenes was closer to that of the Pharisees than of the Sadducees but they also had their own specific beliefs and observances. One of the most important aspects of their communal life was the study of the Torah in its minutest details, a task to which they devoted their entire lives. They withdrew from the defilements of everyday life into their own ‘purified’ monastic centers, where emphasis was laid on meticulous ritual purity such as communal baptism and communal meals, rather than religio-philosophical speculation. . . .

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“Historically, the Essenes have a great deal in common with the Pharisees; both stressed the need for personal piety and separation from the impurities of daily life. Yet Essenes and Pharisees differed in many details of doctrine and practice. Josephus, for instance, tells that while the Essenes believed in immortality of the soul, they rejected the doctrine of bodily resurrection. While the Pharisees took an active part in the daily Jewish life of the masses, even when the Temple worship was controlled by the Sadducees, the Essenes formed a separate sect. The reason seems evident: they deemed themselves the only true Israel and they regarded the religious observances in the cities and the Temple as corrupt. They refused, therefore, to participate in them and went to the wilderness of Judea, to seek God there. . . . Some scholars identify the Essenes as a ‘branch of the Pharisees who conformed to the most rigid rules of levitical purity while aspiring to the highest degree of holiness’ (Kohler), or, in other words, they were essentially Jewish in origin and belonged to the Pharisees.”<sup>17</sup>

The Dead Sea Sect at Qumran was either identical with the Essenes or a branch of that sectarian movement. “The sect was an extremist offshoot of the Jewish apocalyptic movement, whose basic doctrine was the expectation of the end of days. According to the views of this movement, the course of history and its epochs had been preordained by God. ‘Assuredly, all the times appointed by God will come in due course, even as he has determined in His inscrutable wisdom’ (Peshet Habakkuk 2:4, T. H. Gaster’s translation). Hence it was inconceivable that the end of days would fail to come. With its advent, evil would cease, the wicked would be destroyed, and Israel freed from the yoke of the nations. Until it came about mankind was partially under ‘the dominion of Belial.’ But preceding the advent of ‘the final era’ God would raise (or had already raised) up for Himself a community of elect who were destined to be saved from the divine visitation, and who were ‘the eternal [or the righteous] planting’ and the nucleus of the society of the future.”<sup>18</sup> Like the Pharisees, the Essenes and the Dead Sea Sect belonged to the broad apocalyptic movement.

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**8. Gnostic Judaism and the Divinization of Mankind.** Meanwhile, a number of secret sectarian movements, but with a similar worldview, emerged in Diaspora Judaism – particularly in and around Alexandria Egypt. They have been variously known as Ophites, Cainites, Sethians, Melchizedekians, etc. “These movements emerged from the ‘new wine’ of Hellenistic culture and philosophy . . . being put into the ‘old wineskins’ of Jewish religion. The allegorical method of scripture interpretation was one of the manifestations of this trend. The Mosaic law was being interpreted allegorically by Jews who had imbibed of Greek philosophy, and the Law was taken to be a ‘revelation’ of ‘divine philosophy.’ Indeed, since Moses was more ancient than the Greek philosophers, it was natural to suggest that the latter had learned from the former. . . .

“The allegorical interpretation of the Law must have led to divisions in Diaspora Judaism between ‘conservative’ Jews who observed the letter of the Law and ‘philosophizers’ who regarded the letter of the Law as peripheral. Such a division is not merely a hypothetical reconstruction, but is well documented in historical sources. Eusebius specifically speaks of two parties in Diaspora Judaism whose differences are precisely delineated along the lines here suggested. Philo himself provides clear evidence of such divisions. . . . [Thus] Philo polemicizes against allegorists who neglect the letter of the Law and derive from it only spiritual truths . . . They differ from Philo himself not so much in their use of allegory, but precisely in their antinomian [anti-Law] tendencies. . . .

“ . . . [S]uch . . . heresies as those of the Ophites, the Cainites, and the Sethians, as well as the Melchizedekians, are the progeny of the radical antinomians against whom Philo had polemicized. According to the oldest patristic accounts, the Ophites – who according to some accounts are closely associated with the Sethians – were antinomian and venerated the serpent as the revealer of gnosis and as an

incarnation of the divine Wisdom. Reflected in these ideas is the Alexandrian-Jewish doctrine of the divine *dynamis* [power]. Philo and other Alexandrian Jews regarded Sophia as a divine *dynamis*. The Ophites simply took up this doctrine and interpreted it in a heretical fashion.

“The Cainites venerated Cain as the divine power, rejected all moral conventions, and rejected the Law along with its God. . . . The Alexandrian school provides the most plausible link for the origin of this heresy. Indeed, the Cainite sect was already well known to Philo.

“The Sethians shared in the errors of the Ophites and Cainites, teaching that the world was created by angels and not by the highest God. The *dynamis* from on high came down into Seth after Abel’s death, according to the Sethians, and many held Seth to be the Messiah.

“Ophites, Cainites, and Sethians all derive from the Jewish Diaspora. Their members were recruited from Jewish radicals . . . and from philosophically oriented proselytes who had attached themselves to the synagogues. . . . The divine power was seen by them to reside in the Old Testament figures of the serpent, Cain, and other such biblical personages as were not tied to the Law. . . . [Still another] group held Melchizedek to be a ‘great Power’, a being higher than the Messiah, a ‘Son of god’ who occupied a place among the heavenly angels. . . . The figure of Melchizedek . . . becomes for antinomian Alexandrian Jews a powerful symbol of Law-free religion.”<sup>19</sup>

While sectarian apocalyptists in Judea claimed that God had revealed to them the secrets of the imminent end of the world and regarded the world as ultimately under God’s control, their contemporary Jews in the Diaspora who identified themselves as Ophites, Cainites, Sethians, Melchizedekians, etc., “regarded the world as under the control of spiritual powers hostile to God.”<sup>20</sup> These antinomian (anti-Law) movements were later grouped together under the rubric of Gnosticism (*gnosis* = knowledge). “Gnosticism expected a savior who would come into the world and impart knowledge as a means of escaping from this lower world to the transcendent Divine or spiritual realm. It despaired of the flesh and believed that imprisoned within the body was a divine spark, the true Soul, that could be liberated by ‘knowledge’. . . .

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“Basically, ‘Gnosticism’ is concerned with the beginning of things; with the unfolding of God from the transcendent Absolute, the origin of the cosmos and the soul, the pre-creation crisis or ‘fall’ and the origin of evil, and the descent and ensnarement of the Light within the Darkness of matter. In other words, Cosmogony; how everything came to be.

“Certainly the Gnostic teachers also spoke of the descent of the Savior, who brought salvation through Knowledge (Gnosis), and the final destruction of the world once all the trapped particles of Light have been freed from the clutches of matter, but anyone reading the

material of the Alexandrian-Hellenistic Gnostics . . . is struck by the disproportionate attention paid to cosmogony at the expense of soteriology. One encounters long descriptions of the origin of things – the emanation of the deities (‘Aeons’) within the Godhead, the creation of man’s body by demons, and the Gnostic version of the Adam and Eve genesis myth . . . In contrast, the account of salvation through the transcendent redeemer is usually quite cursory.

“Gnosticism deals with the origin of things in a profound, if often over-enthusiastic, manner. . . . [Furthermore,] Gnosticism can only see the end of things in terms of the final separation of Light and Darkness and the consequent destruction of the latter (which includes physical reality); the whole cosmology only considers things from a very negative point of view.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the eighth model for the “human manifestation of God,” as articulated by the Gnostics, contends that divinity became imprisoned in fallen, demonic flesh at the very beginning and can only be liberated through the acquisition of true *gnosis* (spiritual knowledge).

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## Conclusion

Because the One-and-Only God determined not to dwell alone, in cosmic isolation, he inaugurated the creation of “otherness” – physically, biologically and anthropologically. Furthermore, since genuine relationships must be mutual, God gave his Creation, through representative “others,” the freedom and responsibility to accept and/or reject its created, relational status. This option gave rise to evil, which emerges from the denial, rejection and elimination of “otherness.”

However, from the beginning God knew both “good” and “evil.” From the beginning he determined to share his relationality – all goodness – and to bear the burden of all evil. That is why the serpent in the Genesis story could say to Adam and Eve, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5).

Now, for more than 4,000 years, God has either instituted or permitted the emergence of various models for the human manifestation of himself or of substitutes for himself. These models include:

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1. The gift to mankind of a “god-consciousness” involving the metaphoric presence of God in the human brain.
2. The attempted ascent of mankind to the heavenly realm and reunion with God – portrayed in the biblical story of the Tower of Babel – as the gift of god-consciousness began to wane.
3. The alleged emanation of God to this earth in the form of imperial rulers and their political power structures, which professed to provide a communal soul for the direction and ultimate salvation of submissive mankind.
4. The divinely designed wilderness Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple, which prefigured the birth, life, death and resurrection of God himself as the Human One. <sup>22</sup>
5. The Zadokite (and subsequent Sadducean) misapprehension of the Temple as supposedly symbolic of the ethereal deification of the High Priest when he entered the Most Holy Place, thus becoming the human representation of God on behalf of the Chosen People apart from embodiment.
6. The pseudo-Solomonic reduction of God to the meaninglessness and nothingness of nihilism in order that mankind itself might become the human manifestation of God.
7. The sectarian view of the Pharisees and Essenes, in the Hasmonean era, that God would imminently appear to assure immortality of the soul for those who had been wholly obedient to his Law.
8. The Gnostic view of Diaspora Judaism that God had been imprisoned in the flesh at creation and could only be ultimately liberated through the acquisition of spiritual *gnosis* (knowledge).

Following the loss of mankind’s “god-consciousness,” only the wilderness Tabernacle and the First Temple signified YHWH’s promise to become human and to effect our full and true humanity. All other historical models falsely

symbolized mankind's self-divinization. The emergence of counterfeit models for "the human manifestation of God" accelerated during the Hasmonean era of Judaism. These divinized models abandoned relationality, pursued possession/dispossession, and thus represented an unprecedented cauldron of evil. Moreover, they provided the political, religious and cultural environment of the Roman era, which coincided with a ninth development – a reality that transcended all models. That reality was the revelation of God himself as the fully and truly Human One.

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## Notes and References

1. Genesis 3:5.
2. See Dan O. Via, *The Revelation of God And/As Human Reception: In the New Testament* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).
3. "... [The] universe . . . today is about 73% hydrogen, 24% helium, and 3% heavier elements" (Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God* [Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1995], p. 20).
4. See "Covenant and Creation," *Outlook* (March/April 2003).
5. See Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1990).
6. The Hebrew term *HaShem* is a frequent metaphor for God himself. "*HaShem* ('the Name') is a euphemism for *YHVH*" (David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* [Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1996], p. 239).
7. "The Egyptians called the invisible life force, that spark of life which energetically manifests itself from within, the *ka*" (Karl W. Luckert, *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire: Theological and Philosophical Roots of Christendom in Evolutionary Perspective* [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991], p. 44).
8. See Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1960).
9. See "The First Temple: United Monarchical Period," *Outlook* (November 2001).
10. See Margaret Barker, "Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origin of the Apocalypses," at [www.marquette.edu/maqom/veil](http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/veil).
11. "The Sadducees sought to bring God down to man. Their God was anthropomorphic and the worship offered him was like homage paid a human king or ruler. . . . On the problem of human conduct and activities, the Sadducees seemed to have believed that God is not concerned with man's affairs. As Josephus puts it: 'As for the Sadducees they take away fate and say there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its disposal, but they suppose that all our actions are in our own power, so that we ourselves are the cause of what is good and receive what is evil from our own folly' (Ant., 12:173)" (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. [1997], s.v. Menahem Mansoor, "Sadducees").
12. Eric Winkel, "Tragedy and Nihilism," at [www.uwm.edu/~sands/awwzine/winkel.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/~sands/awwzine/winkel.htm).
13. Eugene (Fr. Seraphim) Rose, *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age* (Forestville, CA: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1994), p. 7.

14. See Al Maxey, "The Silent Centuries: The Maccabean Revolt," at [www.zianet.com/maxey/InterLst.htm](http://www.zianet.com/maxey/InterLst.htm), for a brief survey of the five Hasmonean generations, including Mattathias (168-166 BCE); his five sons, John, Simon, Judas, Eleazer and Jonathan ( -135 BCE); John Hyrcanus (135-104 BCE), son of Simon; Aristobulus I (104-103 BCE), eldest son of John Hyrcanus I; Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE), younger son of John Hyrcanus I; Salome Alexandra (76-67 BCE), widow of Alexander Jannaeus; and finally Alexandra's two sons, John Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II (67-63 BCE).
15. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. (1997), s.v. Menahem Mansoor, "Pharisees."
16. M. Alan Kazlev, "Gnosticism and Apocalyptic," at [www.kheper.net/topics/Gnosticism/Gnosticism\\_and\\_Apocalyptic.htm](http://www.kheper.net/topics/Gnosticism/Gnosticism_and_Apocalyptic.htm).
17. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. (1997), s.v. Menahem Mansoor, "Essenes." The fact that the Essenes believed in the immortality of the soul while rejecting bodily resurrection implies a Gnostic tendency. Furthermore, the Dead Sea Scrolls (from the Essene community at Qumran) include copies of the proto-Gnostic scrolls of 1 Enoch. See Margaret Barker, "The Evidence of the Gnostics," in *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).
18. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. (1997), s.v. Jacob Licht, "Dead Sea Sect."
19. Birger Pearson, "Friedlander Revisited: Alexandrian Judaism and Gnostic Origins," in *Gnosticism, Judaism and Egyptian Christianity* (1990), at [www.dhushara.com/book/consum/gnos/jgnos.htm](http://www.dhushara.com/book/consum/gnos/jgnos.htm).
20. Kazlev, "Gnosticism and Apocalyptic."
21. Ibid.
22. See "The First Temple: United Monarchical Period."