



THE COMMANDMENTS

FRANK ARUNDELL

THE COMMANDMENTS

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

FRANK ARUNDELL

COVER; Rembrandt van Rijn, Moses with the Tablets of the Law, 1659. Oil on canvas, Gemaldegalerie, Berlin, Germany.

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PART ONE

From the Beginning to Abraham

If we are to accept that God made the rules for all of the creatures of his Creation, one might be excused for asking the question: “Why then did He need make a separate set of rules...for mankind?”

He didn't at first, of course. There was no need. He had created Man in His image and likeness, perfect and complete. Adam was in his Eden and all was right with the World, at least until Eve came along. At that point God issued his first edict and forbade man and his mate to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was then that Eve had her fateful lunch with the Serpent.

This is the story that has been handed down to us in Genesis, the first book of the Bible as Sacred Scripture. Charles Darwin tells us an entirely different story. If his Descent of Man from “some pre existing form” is to be believed, then the rules that governed man's behavior were the very same as those that governed that of the animals, well beyond the point of evolutionary transition from brain to mind..When apes became men.

Darwin postulated a transitional species, an ape-man, the proverbial “missing link.” Indeed, until most recently the focus of human anthropology has been the collection and classification of the remains of the many hominid species into a

genealogical family tree. Darwin could not have imagined that the key to unlocking the secret of human descent would be found not in fossilized bone, but in the living cells of modern humans; the mitochondrion.

Mitochondria are organelles found in almost all the cells of virtually every living thing. They are often referred to as the “powerhouses” of the cell, generating the large amounts of energy needed by the organism to make its living. What sets the mitochondria apart from other organelles of the cell such as the nucleus is that the genetic material contained within it is that of the organism’s mother. This maternal DNA referred to properly as Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) has proved vital in the study of human evolution and the migration of early *human* populations.

Using mtDNA, researchers are able to trace similarities inherited in generations of offspring down a single ancestral line for thousands of generations and have discovered that fragments of genomic material carried in the mitochondria of all humans alive today can be traced to a single female that lived in east Africa some 150,000 to 200,000 years ago. This common ancestor, the “mother of all mothers” has been referred in the popular literature as “Mitochondrial Eve.”

Would it be wrong to equate “Mitochondrial Eve” with Eve of the Bible? Surely the research *does* support the central tenet of the book of Genesis; that we are all descended from the same woman and that we are all of the family of God. Owing to this, many Evangelicals and “Earth-Creationists” greeted this research with enthusiastic support, viewing it as a validation of the biblical account of Creation and some even went so far as to claim that it in fact disproved evolution! Certainly the

research does NOT support the notion nor purport to claim “Mitochondrial Eve” was the first female human.

What impact then does this research have in terms of evolution? It does not disprove current evolutionary theory.

We know in their late preternatural state humanoids were prone to what really could be called religion. When reasoning people conceived of a god, as a greater power than themselves, they created means to satiate or memorialize that power in ingenious, sometimes gruesome ritualistic ways. Human-sacrifice, animal sacrifice; physical distortion by binding; cutting; idol-creation; magic; intoxicating potions, and the like. There were many gods to satisfy, all relating to bettering their lives and protection against the elements. In this we can detect the nascent virtue of hope. “To kill the hunted beast or, later, the domestic animal is equivalent to a “sacrifice” in which the victims are interchangeable. We must add that all these concepts came into existence during the last phases of the process of hominization.”

If the Paleanthropians are regarded as complete men, it follows that they also possessed a certain number of beliefs and practiced certain rites. For, as we stated before, the experience of the sacred constitutes an element in the structure of consciousness. In other words, if the question of the religiosity or nonreligiosity of prehistoric men is raised, it falls to the defenders of nonreligiosity to adduce proofs in support of their hypothesis. Probably the theory of the nonreligiosity of the Paleanthropians was conceived and generally accepted during the heyday of evolutionism, when similarities to the primates had just been discovered. But a misconception is involved here, for what matters is not the anatomico-osteological structure of the Paleanthropians (which is similar, to be sure, to that of the

primates) but their works; and these demonstrate the activity of an intelligence that cannot be defined otherwise than as “human.” Eliade, Mircea. History of Religious Ideas, Volume 1: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries (p. 5). University of Chicago Press. Kindle Edition.

*The “clay” became man at that moment in which a being for the first time was capable of forming, however dimly, the thought “God”. The first Thou that—however stammeringly—was said by human lips to God marks the moment in which spirit arose in the world. Here the Rubicon of anthropogenesis was crossed. For it is not the use of weapons or fire, not new methods of cruelty or of useful activity, that constitute man, but rather his ability to be immediately in relation to God. [regardless of what shape that god may have initially taken] This holds fast to the doctrine of the special creation of man; herein lies the center of belief in creation in the first place. Herein also lies the reason why the moment of anthropogenesis cannot possibly be determined by paleontology: anthropogenesis is **the rise of the spirit**, which cannot be excavated with a shovel. The theory of evolution does not invalidate the faith, nor does it corroborate it. But it does challenge the faith to understand itself more profoundly and thus to help man to understand himself and to become increasingly what he is: the being who is supposed to say Thou to God in eternity.” (Fr. Stephan Horn.: *Creation and Evolution* . Ignatius Press. Kindle Edition.) Modified.*

Only through the gift of reason and a free will, in which we are made in the image and likeness of our Creator, were we able to understand the nuance of an “eternal-return” substantiated by Jesus’ resurrection and ascension in his “glorious-state.”

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We may assume that our creation story began with the Big Bang 13.82 billion years ago. So far there is only evidence after a few seconds this side of the event, but beyond the event, to put it simply, there are only two schools of thought. We are the result of an act of God from *nothing other than the “mind” of God*, or we are the product, by chance, of *something other than nothing*; but can only make hi-tech guesses as to what that something was or is. If we were to consider the time it took for our garden to be prepared for our occupancy on a 24 hour clock with time starting at $t=0$, our ancestors (Homo Habilis) would have been upright chasing game on the savanna of East Africa, at 23h:59m:48s.

There is either one or many couples who at one time or another, suddenly or slowly, stepped through the doors of *reason*; multiplied, and became the unique and one-and-only human race we're all part of today. It shouldn't be difficult to see how all people are brothers (and sisters) as the poet Schiller had beautifully proclaimed in his Ode to Joy. Yet, human beings, endowed with reason and will, still generally found rules repugnant because rules require responsibility to authority, and even a greater responsibility for those *in* authority; an obvious misunderstanding of the concept of freedom, considering it as an absolute “right.”

Biblically, a lot went wrong with the progeny of Adam and Eve after the “original sin” of disobedience to their Maker, the apple episode. After Cain killed his brother Able, perhaps a biblical precursor to war, i.e., brother against brother, things went from bad to worse with the “family of man” all the way to Noah. The Bible tells us it was 10 generations. Though the Lord exempted Noah and his family, he blotted-out most of

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Adam's other offspring by drowning them all with a great flood.

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

(Genesis 6:5-7)

While Abraham was in Haran, after the death of his father the Lord is said to have called to him:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

(Genesis 12: 1-3)

In the biblical 400 years between Noah and Abraham's trek to the land of Canaan the "family of man" had grown rapidly and the gods were as various as the imagination the cultures could produce. [Abram] Abraham was a Hebrew. (*Britannica* tells us:) **Hebrew** is any member of an ancient northern Semitic people that were the ancestors of the Jews. In the Old Testament narrative of the Patriarchs, God is given many epithets which start with El. Also, many descriptions of ancient Israel's God are similar to those of Ugarit El. For example, in the Bible, God or "El Shaddai" is depicted as being a provider of progeny in the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stories. (*BYU ScholarsArchive Citation: Jed Robinson, "The God of the*

Patriarchs and the Ugaritic Texts: A Shared Religious and Cultural Identity." Studia Antiqua 8, no. 1, 2010)

No one who has read the Pentateuch will deny the persistence of the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. Abraham's incredible obedience to this God, his utter faith in him, if you will, made him the "Father in faith" of a founding religion, the Jews, and the two most numerous religions in the world today, Christianity and Islam.

After the battle of the Valley of Siddim, Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of "God Most High," presumably the same God Most High, who had been directing Abraham. When he brought out bread and wine he blessed Abraham and said:

*Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"*

After several important covenantal understandings with the God Most High; and the birth of Ishmael To Sarai's (his wife's servant) an Egyptian woman named Hagar; the covenant of the Circumcision was accomplished. God promised an offspring from the elderly barren Sarai, his wife.

Sarah (the name God gave her) your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

Probably the most poignant story in the Old Testament regarding Abraham is his unyielding obedience to God, when

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he agreed to sacrifice his only son Isaac at the behest of the Lord testing his sincerity. Blood sacrifice was still the ritual of satisfaction. As the story goes, an angel of the Lord called him from heaven and said:

Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

(Genesis 22: 11-15)

Monotheism, the One God of Israel had become the belief of all the children of Abraham, and the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, a sign to another *only Son* sacrificed for forgiveness of humanity’s sinful ways by the Father of all mankind.

PART TWO

The Law, The Bible and Moses

The greatest commandment tells us— after God, we must love our neighbor as ourselves. In fact, it is said to be equal to the love of God. If we are void of self-acceptance (self love) there is little chance of us caring for others; we need to know what love *is* in order to love. Putting oneself before all others is at variance with love. Love cannot be taught, it is expressed in action. It is pure love when it is given away with honest compassion and an open heart and helping hand. Pitying others is not a form of love. Pity is just an off shoot of pride when it says, “I’m glad it isn’t me.” It can be said, of course, that pity is a natural emotion; but we are not simply natural, we are super-natural. No other animal is able to see human life as participation in the life of God, through Christ, in the Spirit. Transcendancy is a human trait where we sense— being, consciousness and existence— beyond the limits of material experience. It is incumbent on the physicalists among us to offer specific material proof of the absence of the ethical and ideological inner-values of mankind; alas, they cannot, no more than we can offer proof of God, the Creator, outside of Jesus Christ. Only Jesus is the nexus between the Father and humanity. Divine law is expressed in him as one of us. The Father and the Son are One in the Spirit in whom we may freely participate, even physically under the accidents of bread and wine for believers.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for

yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”(Matthew 11: 28-30)

When we consider the “ethical and ideological inner-values of mankind” we are in fact considering the Natural Law; including the laws people make for us, and the laws we make for ourselves. **Natural law** is the philosophy that certain rights, moral values, and responsibilities **are** inherent in human **nature**, and that those rights **can** be understood through simple reasoning. The **law** of **nature** is universal, meaning that it applies to everyone in the same way. Under the title Natural Law, the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy gives us a very well expressed summation and explanation of the up-to-date principles and definitions for average people like us to understand. It’s a little long (about 10 or so pages), too long to download here, so I will just gyp the first couple of paragraphs so you get the gist of it. The full version is an easy read.

Natural Law:

“The term ‘natural law’ is ambiguous. It refers to a type of moral theory, as well as to a type of legal theory, but the core claims of the two kinds of theory are logically independent. It does not refer to *the laws of nature*, the laws that science aims to describe. According to natural law moral theory, the moral standards that govern human behavior are, in some sense, objectively derived from the nature of human beings and the nature of the world. While being logically independent of natural law legal theory, the two theories intersect. However, the majority of the article focuses on natural law legal theory.”

“According to natural law legal theory, the authority of legal standards necessarily derives, at least in part, from

considerations having to do with the moral merit of those standards. There are a number of different kinds of natural law legal theories, differing from each other with respect to the role that morality plays in determining the authority of legal norms. The conceptual jurisprudence of John Austin provides a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of law that distinguishes law from non-law in every possible world. Classical natural law theory such as the theory of Thomas Aquinas focuses on the overlap between natural law moral and legal theories. Similarly, the new-naturalism of John Finnis is a development of classical natural law theory. In contrast, the procedural naturalism of Lon L. Fuller is a rejection of the conceptual naturalist idea that there are necessary substantive moral constraints on the content of law. Lastly, Ronald Dworkin's theory is a response and critique of legal positivism. All of these theories subscribe to one or more basic tenets of natural law legal theory and are important to its development and influence.”

Note:

Once you've digested this summary of the Natural Law you may wish to look up the *Laws of Nature* in the same encyclopedia. I found it most interesting in concert with the Natural Law Legal theories. We sometimes get them confused.

The ubiquitous cartoon of the cave man, club in hand, dragging a woman by the hair doesn't seem too far off from the Hollywood and Washington scene we've been getting to know lately. Were it not for the law, no telling where we might have wound up. One could even say we might be retrogressing rather than culturally progressing in certain quarters of our civil society. I've have always gotten a laugh out of the “Blame Game.” Adam blaming Eve for giving him the apple to bite

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into, whereupon Eve blames the Devil for suggesting the whole sordid episode. Then God punishes the Devil by turning him into a snake and kicks them all out of paradise under a life sentence of hard-labor for them and their future family. What's missing in Genesis may be Adam blaming God:— “If it wasn't for that damn rule about the apple everything would've been fine”. Since our “enlightenment,” blaming God for all of the world's disobediences has become very sheik, yet many of us are grateful to be able reconcile through the Savior whose burden is light. However, since the brain to mind transition, humanity's diversions have been a strange combination of both good and evil; mostly evil,— and it started on day one; or should I say day six or thereabout?

The Law:

We have never been without rules. Only in the last few hundred years certain lunatics have been suggesting we can live without them. Anarchy, along with Utopia, has never been known to survive for very long anywhere in the world. In a free organized society it is said: “government” derives its just powers through the consent of the governed, this gives pause for the question as to what or from whom do the governed derive their consent? In a rare case of modern worldly wisdom the American Declaration of Independence seems to be one document that has an answer to that question. It (the Declaration) is supported “with a firm Reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence.” One could say that it is the power of God upon whom the framers relied. Although Article VI of the American Constitution does not require a religious test for any office of public trust it is very clear that the American Federal and State Governments were not without at least a connection to the Deity— since all its executive and

judicial officers are bound by Oath or Affirmation. One should not assume “affirmation” here means anything less than a solemn promise under the law. For me, this rings of a deep sense of spirituality.

The law is organic, not unlike any other living-thing. It has a “letter” and a “spirit,” a body and a soul. Like human nature it has evolved, but the principle of the law does not change. I think there is a great misunderstanding between those who see principle as a dynamic thing, changing with the times— in which case culture often becomes the law. That view is opposed by those who believe that within the law is its infrangible soul asserting itself only for humanities’s common good. Cultural differences tend to divide people depending on geography and politics. An exaggeration of racial and creedal predispositions usually result. When the very basic principle of the inalienable value and meaning of every human life is able to be understood, then the law stands only for the good, and that intrinsic good— is GOD. Ostensibly, no one has been able to turn his back on the power of God without loosing himself or herself in some way in the process. “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will man find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1: 27)

The Bible:

Of all the books that have ever been written I can’t imagine any that have been scrutinized more than the Bible. More scholarship has gone into its passages, both Old Testament and New, than any other historic writings. Every year, for generations, people have been testing its legitimacy and

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veracity either for the purposes of approving of it or disapproving of it, depending on their faith— or lack of it. “Scientists have discovered the earliest known Hebrew writing — an inscription dating from the 10th century BCE, during the period of King David's reign.”

“The breakthrough could mean that portions of the Bible were written even centuries earlier than previously thought. (The Bible's Old Testament is thought to have been first written down in an ancient form of Hebrew.) Until now, many scholars have held that the Hebrew Bible originated in the 6th century B.C., because Hebrew writing was thought to stretch back no further. But the newly deciphered Hebrew text is about four centuries older, scientists announced this month. ‘It indicates that the Kingdom of Israel already existed in the 10th century BCE and that at least some of the biblical texts were written hundreds of years before the dates presented in current research,’ said Gershon Galil, a professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Haifa in Israel, who deciphered the ancient text.”

“BCE stands for ‘before common era,’ and is equivalent to B.C., or before Christ. The writing was discovered more than a year ago on a pottery shard dug up during excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, near Israel's Elah valley. The excavations were carried out by archaeologist Yosef Garfinkel of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. At first, scientists could not tell if the writing was Hebrew or some other local language. Finally, Galil was able to decipher the text. He identified words particular to the Hebrew language and content specific to Hebrew culture to prove that the writing was, in fact, Hebrew.”

By Clara Moskowitz)

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“Christians see in the New Testament the fulfillment of the promise of the Old Testament. It relates and interprets the new covenant, represented in the life, death [and resurrection] of Jesus, between God and the followers of the Christ. Like the Old Testament, it contains a variety of kinds of writing. Among its 27 books are selected recollections of the life and acts and sayings of Jesus in the four Gospels; a historical narrative of the first years of the Christian church in the Acts of the Apostles; the Epistles—letters of advice, instruction, admonition, and exhortation to local groups of Christians—14 attributed to Paul, one (Hebrews) probably in error, and seven by three other authors. An apocalyptic description of the intervention of God in history, is the Book of Revelation”

“The books are not arranged chronologically in the New Testament. The Epistles of Paul, for example, which address the immediate problems of local churches shortly after Christ’s death [and resurrection] are considered to be the earliest texts. The books are instead arranged in a more logical narrative order: the Gospels telling the life of Jesus and his teachings; the Acts detailing the work of Christ’s followers in propagating the Christian faith; the Epistles teaching the meaning and implications of the faith; and Revelation prophesying future events and the culmination of the divine purpose.”

“The setting of the New Testament within the Christian community is one factor that makes a biography of Jesus or a history of the first-century church difficult. The books of the New Testament were composed not in order to satisfy historical curiosity about the events they recount but to bear witness to faith in the action of God through the events. A history of the New Testament is made difficult by the relatively short time span covered by its books when compared with the millennium

and more of history described by the Old Testament. There is less historical information in the New Testament than in the Old, and many historical facts about the church in the first century therefore must be arrived at by inference from statements in the Gospels or Epistles.” (Encyclopedia Britannica, modified) The treasure of the New Testament are the living words of Christ himself, the Messiah, as witnessed and recorded or remembered and passed on by his Disciples.

“The first five books of the Bible make up a group which was known to the Jews as ‘The Law’ and for many centuries all five of the books were attributed to Moses as the sole or principal author. However, modern study of the texts has revealed a variety of styles, a lack of sequence and such repetitions and variations in narrative that it is impossible to ascribe the whole group to a single author; four distinct literary “traditions” can be identified and found side by side in the Pentateuch. Two of these go back to the time when Israel became a nation— a period dominated by the figure of Moses: the traditions of earlier times converging on him and the memories of what happened under his leadership together made up the national epic. One means of distinguishing between these two separate strands is their use of different names for God: one employs the name Yahweh and is known as the Yahwist, the other uses Elohim and is known as the Elohist. The two other identifiable written traditions are later: one known as the Deuteronomic, introducing additions and revisions by Levites after the fall of the kingdom of Israel; and one the work of editors after the Exile, known as the Priestly Tradition. The Mosaic religion set its enduring seal on the faith and practice of the nation of Israel, and the Mosaic law remained its standard; the modifications required by changing conditions over some seven centuries were presented as interpretations of the mind of

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Moses and vested themselves with his authority.” (Introduction to the Pentateuch from the New Jerusalem Bible, Henry Wansbrough) Moses, the giver of the Law and the primary prophet of the Jews is the first indispensable agent of Salvation history for Christians.

In the very last book of the Old Testament the prophet says:

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

To this day, Jewish Seders include an empty chair at the table in anticipation that Elijah will return to herald the Messiah in fulfillment of Malachi’s words. These days with the state of Israel in a precarious situation in the Levant, it is probably a good idea to give some thought to Malachi’s prophesy of Elijah’s return. At the same time recalling Jesus’ mention of John the Baptist as the one “crying in the wilderness” to make straight the way of the Lord may not be a bad idea either. To believe there is no priority or sense of urgency here would be, in our opinion, foolish. Moses and Elijah are the book-ends of the first covenant, Jesus himself, born at the fullness of time is the new and eternal covenant, so that the sins of humankind may be forgiven by the mercy of God on the cross of Christ in the Spirit of love. Creation and Redemption are totally linked.

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Moses, the most important prophet of all three Abrahamic religions; making up about 52% of the world’s population,

began his “correspondence” with the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob in the third chapter of Exodus of the Old Testament:

3 Exodus:

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, ‘I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.’ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then he said, ‘Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.’ He said further, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, ‘I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.’ But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ He said, ‘I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.’ But Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the Israelites and say to them, “The

God of your ancestors has sent me to you”, and they ask me, “What is his name?” what shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ He said further, ‘Thus you shall say to the Israelites, “I am has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the Israelites, “The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.”’

It is difficult for the pragmatic-relativists of our day to engage with “scripture” without thinking of it as something out of The Lord of the Rings or Star Wars, imaginary fairy-tales so to speak. Most of us count ourselves as “realists” yet a realist is a person (or a philosopher) who believes “universals” are real and exist independently of anyone thinking them up. No matter how it’s revealed to us some form of religion does seem to be a human universal. Without getting into scientific-semantics about the way the eyes see for example, it would be like the color “red” exists; a philosophical question. It is reasonable to concede that mythology dressed in common language need not necessarily be false. Peter, who observed the transfiguration (if you trust him) likely gave us the right advise: “... no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” We should consider ourselves graced to believe; not everyone is so fortunate to have received the comforting truth despite our sometimes problematic natural-inclinations as Peter found out for himself as the cock crowed thrice. Hey, nobody’s perfect! Most of us, when put to the test would have dropped the stone and walked away.

After the great exodus from Egypt where the army of the Pharaohs was drowned chasing them, Moses brought the children of Israel to Horeb or Mount Sinai. Recent scholarship

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about the Exodus by Richard Elliot Friedman suggests in his book titled *The Exodus*, that it might not have been all the Israelites as a nation who made the trek across Sinai to the holy mountain, but just the Levites with Moses as their leader. I am not equipped to comment on that, but it does sound reasonable.

If you have ever been to Sinai or climbed the holy mountain the story comes alive for you, for others it's just stupendous reading. Let me just gyp a few paragraphs from Wikipedia to bring the story to the fore, but reading it from Exodus is really the best way of experiencing it. It is truly great sacred literature.

“The biblical narrative of the revelation at Sinai begins in Exodus 19 after the arrival of the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. On the morning of the third day of their encampment, ‘there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud’, and the people assembled at the base of the mount. After ‘the LORD came down upon mount Sinai’, Moses went up briefly and returned and prepared the people, and then in Exodus 20 ‘God spoke’ to all the people the words of the covenant, that is, the ‘ten commandments’ as it is written. Modern biblical scholarship differs as to whether Exodus 19-20 describes the people of Israel as having directly heard all or some of the decalogue, or whether the laws are only passed to them through Moses.”

“The people were afraid to hear more and moved ‘afar off’, and Moses responded with ‘Fear not.’ Nevertheless, he drew near the ‘thick darkness’ where ‘the presence of the Lord’ was to hear the additional statutes and ‘judgments’, all which he ‘wrote’ in the ‘book of the covenant’ which he read to the

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people the next morning, and they agreed to be obedient and do all that the LORD had said. Moses escorted a select group consisting of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and ‘seventy of the elders of Israel’ to a location on the mount where they worshipped ‘afar off’ and they ‘saw the God of Israel’ above a ‘paved work’ like clear sapphire stone. And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tablets of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them. And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.— First mention of the tablets is in Exodus 24: 12-24

The mount was covered by the cloud for six days, and on the seventh day Moses went into the midst of the cloud and was ‘in the mount forty days and forty nights.’ And Moses said, ‘the LORD delivered unto me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spoke with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.’ Before the full forty days expired, the children of Israel collectively decided that something had happened to Moses, and compelled Aaron to fashion a golden calf, and he ‘built an altar before it’ and the people ‘worshipped’ the calf.

After the full forty days, Moses and Joshua came down from the mountain with the tablets of stone: ‘And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount.’ After the events in chapters 32 and 33, the LORD told Moses, ‘Hew two tablets of stone like the first: and I will write upon these tablets the words that were in the first tablets, which you broke.’ ‘And he wrote on the tablets, according to the first

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writing, the ten commandments, about which the LORD spoke to you on the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me.’

According to Jewish tradition, Exodus 20:1–17 constitutes God’s first recitation and inscription of the ten commandments on the two tablets, which Moses broke in anger with his rebellious nation, and were later rewritten on replacement stones and placed in the ark of the covenant; and Deuteronomy 5:4–20 consists of God’s re-telling of the Ten Commandments to the younger generation who were to enter the Promised Land. The passages in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 contain more than ten imperative statements, totaling 14 or 15 in all.” (Wikipedia, Ten Commandments)

Then God spoke all these words:

1 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

2 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

3 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

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4 Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

5 Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

6 You shall not murder.

7 You shall not commit adultery.

8 You shall not steal.

9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

“While all adherents of the Abrahamic religions consider themselves to be monotheists, Judaism does not consider Christianity to be monotheistic, recognizing only Islam as monotheistic. Islam likewise does not recognize modern-day Christianity as monotheistic, primarily due to the Christian doctrine of Trinity, which Islam argues was not a part of the original monotheistic Christianity as preached by Jesus. Christians, on the other hand, Christians argue that the doctrine of the Trinity is a valid expression of monotheism, citing that

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the Trinity does not consist of three separate deities, but rather the three persons, who exist con-substantially (as one substance) within a single Godhead.” (Wikipedia, Monotheism)

Anybody who has seriously read the New Testament and engaged in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, most certainly have seen how the early fathers of the Christian faith deduced the doctrine of the Trinity from the words of Christ himself.

“In Roman Catholicism, Jesus freed Christians from most of Jewish religious laws, but not from the obligation to keep the Commandments. It has been said that they are to the moral order what the creation story is to the natural order.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church—the official exposition of the Catholic Church’s Christian beliefs—the Commandments are considered essential for spiritual good-health and growth, and serve as the basis for social justice. Church teaching of the Commandments is largely based on the Old and New Testaments and the writings of the early Church Fathers. In the New Testament, Jesus acknowledged their validity and instructed his disciples to go further, demanding a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees. Summarized by Jesus from the Torah (the Shema) into two “great commandments” that teach the love of God and love of neighbor, they instruct individuals on their relationships with both.

Since we are “endowed by our Creator with the unalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” we could have fearlessly assumed a relativist stance— permitting secularism where no authority is necessary beyond the changeable civil-law and our own free judgment. How far can that be from the

infraction of our “first parents”? Maybe this is what Christians mean when they say we have inherited their “original sin.” I believe we’re safe in saying that the sin of false-pride is or has been known by most of us at some time in our lives where we inadvertently or purposely reject the “Ultimate Truth” in favor of *personal truth*. With the shape the world is in today, it probably is as good a time as any to reverse that trend and accept with humility the words of Jesus: “*Peace be with you.*” and “*Do not be unbelieving but believing.*”

(John:20: 26-28)

The Transfiguration:

“Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with whom I am well pleased; listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Get up and do not be afraid.’ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.”

“As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, ‘Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.’ And the disciples asked him, ‘Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ He replied, ‘Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things; but

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I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist."

(Matthew 17: 1-13)

The Transfiguration of Jesus makes a direct connection between the Old and New Covenants; between the Father, Son and Spirit; between Moses the giver of the Law; Jesus the fulfillment of the law; Elijah the Prophet of the end times; and Peter, James and John, the beginning of what will become the Apostolic-Succession in today's Christian churches. In his second letter, Peter writes:

"...[W]e did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

(2 Peter: 16-21)

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It is not insignificant that Peter, James and John find Jesus speaking with both Moses and Elijah, and hears the affirmation from the Father regarding Jesus' mission and ministry as the Savior of mankind through the Jews. Salvation history is summarized in the Transfiguration event which Jesus took three of the Apostles to witness.

Monday, the second week of Advent:

Alleluia, Alleluia

Behold the king will come, the Lord of the earth,
and he himself will lift the yoke of our captivity.

Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Gospel:

“One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing. And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set him in his presence. But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, ‘As for you, your sins are forgiven.’

Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?’ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, ‘What are you thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk?’ ‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’— he said to the one who was paralyzed, ‘I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.’

He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, ‘We have seen incredible things today.’” (Luke 5:17-26)

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7th day within the octave of Christmas,

Alleluia, alleluia.

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

To those who accepted him

he gave power to become the children of God.

Alleluia, alle

NOTES



[The Epistemic Status of Evolutionary Theory](#)