

Reality Blockers, Sexual Language, and Reasoned Reality

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Although the frequency of reality blockers in the Gospels is not important for this study, the question of their frequency in language needs to be addressed. In other words, is the strange detail about the age of the donkey in the Jesus narratives just an accident, possibly a real detail, or are reality blockers widespread devices used in many parts of the Bible, possibly even in ordinary language today without us being aware of them? In order to show that reality blockers are widespread not only in the Bible but in language as well, I will use a story this time which has nothing to do with Abraham's donkey although it is not entirely unrelated to Abraham. The story is found in Genesis 19:1-5:

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them."

The reality behind this story is widely believed to be sexual, more precisely, homosexual. Because the word used is "to know" (יָדָעָה אִתָּם) and its sexual connotations are so well attested in the Bible, its reference to sex is believed to be unquestionable in this passage. In spite of such a clear sexual reference, there is no sexual reality behind the story or within the story. In other words, no sexual act takes place of any kind. To argue that Lot's intervention and eventually that of God's angels prevented the attackers from carrying out their sexual intentions does not change the fact that no sex really happened. Therefore, the words "so that we may know them" do not refer to any sexual or homosexual activity that really happened on this occasion. Those who take the reality in this story to be homosexual reason that although the words "so that we may know them" do not describe sexual activity which the inhabitants of Sodom carried out on this occasion, the language does describe accurately what they did whenever they had sex. Accordingly, the reality behind the story must still be homosexual which rightfully justifies the drastic punishment of the city.

At closer examination, however, the supposed homosexuality of the inhabitants of the city as it is described in the story can hardly be imagined in real life. For instance, the story tells that all the inhabitants of the city, from young to old, came to assault sexually the two strangers. Even if we can imagine that homosexuality was so universal in Sodom that not even one single heterosexual was left, to assume that all of them did not just practice it at home but would not want to miss the opportunity to do it in public goes beyond anything imaginable. That the inhabitants of Sodom did use sexual language no one can deny, but that sexual language necessarily means sex defies anything we know about sexual language in real life.

In order to point out the problem, let us imagine the following situation which is quite a common occurrence on highways in the United States as well as in other countries. A female is driving and decides to change the lane although she notices that another car is coming from behind in the lane in which she wants to pull. Instead of waiting for the faster car to pass, she pulls in front of it and the speeding car slows down suddenly to avoid the collision. The speeding car pulls into another lane and as the speeding driver passes the female driver he shows her the middle finger pointed upwards. The sexual connotations of the sign are unmistakable: "I want to have sex with you." The middle finger sticking out of the hand pointing upwards is a universal sign language for sexual intercourse in the United States although in other cultures the finger points sideways to better indicate the erected penis of a male standing rather than lying on his back. The middle finger is chosen no doubt because is the largest and in male mentality the size of the male organ indicates sexual potency. Instead of being offended by the sign, however, the female driver finds the male driver and pursuing the connotations of his gesture quite attractive if she had the chance to arrange for a date. As the man keeps driving, another slow car pulls in front of him without much notice and he again has to slow down and to change the lane. As he overtakes this car as well, he makes the same gesture to the male driver this time who had slowed him down. The male driver – who happens to be a homosexual – also finds the speeding driver and pursuing the connotations of his gesture quite attractive if he had a chance to arrange for a date. After a while he stops at a rest area and notices the speeding car parked and the driver in the car examining a map. He signals the driver that he wants to talk to him and as the speeding driver comes out of his car he says: "I am the driver who pulled in front of you on the highway and I would like . . ." but before he gets the chance to finish introducing himself the speeding driver slaps him in the face, gets into his car, and resumes looking on the map. Confused, the male driver gets into his car and drives away. A few minutes later, the female driver also stops at the same rest area and she also notices the car with the driver at the wheel examining a map. She also sees this as an opportunity for her to get to know the driver and arrange for a date and as she tries to introduce herself she is also slapped in the face and she also drives away confused.

What makes the above story unreal is precisely the failure of the two drivers to understand that when the speeding driver indicated that he wanted to have sex with them, in reality he wanted to do violence to them. Although there is no reality blocker in the story, common sense is enough to prevent anyone from assuming that there is any heterosexual or homosexual reality behind that gesture. Therefore, the assumption that the inhabitants of Sodom must have been homosexual is the more surprising as there are very strong reality blockers to indicate that the story has nothing to do with sex. One of the indicators has already been pointed out: the universality of homosexuality which is unthinkable in real life. As if realizing that that is not enough, the narrator introduces a very specific sexual reality blocker:

Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." But they replied, "Stand back!" (19:6-9).

A clear reality blocker is Lot's offer of his daughters to be sexually raped by the crowd. If homosexuality had been so widespread in Sodom that there was no heterosexual or unprofessed homosexual left, Lot must have known about it. Since his offer of his daughters was clearly meant to "please" the assailants sexually (v. 8), his offer would not make sense if the Sodomites had been homosexual. If he really tried to please homosexuals, he should have offered his sons-in-law or possibly his sons whom he apparently had (v. 12). The strongest reality blocker, however, is the refusal of the crowd to rape the daughters, which shows that the assailants were not interested in sex and that the story has nothing to do with sex. Unlike everyday language where reality blockers are rarely missed, scholarly interpretations consistently take reality blockers as reality indicators. Just as the reference to the two donkeys by Matthew is taken as a description of how Jesus actually rode, so also the reference to the two daughters is taken as an indication of the sexual desires of the Sodomites. The following explanation from a reference dictionary on bad language can be found in many biblical commentaries: "That the Sodomites here used know in its biblical sense of carnal knowledge is evident from Lot's offer, three verses later, to give his two virgin daughters to the men, if only they would leave his angelic guests alone – an offer the Sodomites declined."¹ According to this reasoning, if I ask for a gift and I am offered a car which I turn down, my rejection of the car is the unquestionable proof that a car is exactly what I wanted.

¹ Hugh Rawson, s.v. "Sodomite," *Wicked Words: A Treasury of Curses, Insults, Put-Downs, and Other Formerly Unprintable Terms from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1989), 365-6.

The importance of reality blockers for interpretation is negative: they tell us what the meaning is not. Although this is an important step, it is not enough to establish the meaning. To decide that the Sodomites were not interested in sex does not explain what they really wanted. In order to answer that question, we need to look at the larger story which precedes the Lot narrative and has again Abraham as a main character (Gen 18:16-33). In this story, we learn that the two angelic visitors who came to Lot had first visited Abraham and had disclosed to him their intention to destroy Sodom: "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know" (vv. 20-21). Although we are not told what the "sin" is, we are told that the angelic visitors wanted to check whether the accusations against the Sodomites were accurate before they carried out their terrible commission. Either because of his relative Lot or because of his kindness, Abraham decides to mediate for the city. Although the visitors had indicated that their decision to destroy the city was not final and arbitrary, Abraham wants them to commit themselves to clear terms on which the determination of the wickedness of the city should be made: "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ... Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (vv. 23-25). Starting with fifty, Abraham manages to get his guests to commit themselves not to destroy the city if only ten persons were found in the city innocent of the "sin" of which the Sodomites were suspected. Based on his knowledge of the city, Abraham estimated that fifty innocent people was a realistic expectation and the fact that he stopped at ten indicates that he considered that an extremely safe number. Taking into account that the Sodomites considered Lot to be an alien (19:9) probably the number did not include Lot and his family, which would be the worst-case scenario for the city when all ten had to be counted from its native residents, otherwise just six Sodomites innocent of the "sin" would have been enough to save the city. Since the city was destroyed as a result of what happened to the two visitors in Sodom, it follows that no more than nine persons failed to show up on this occasion and prove guilty of the sin committed at this time. The actual number of those who failed to prove their innocence on this occasion is no doubt zero as the text is quite specific about who was present: "both young and old, all the people to the last person"² (Gen 19:4). If homosexuality was "the sin," then it would not have been possible for the whole city to prove its sinfulness on this occasion even if all the men were homosexual and present on this occasion because women could not have proved their homosexuality by raping men even if all of them had been present. Taking into account that in all cultures and times females seem to outnumber men, this

² Although the word used in Hebrew is "man," I render it "person" because in this phrase it regularly refers to people in general including both sexes, even children.

must have been the case in Sodom as well, therefore at least half of the city could not have proved their sinfulness on this occasion and that would have easily exceeded ten persons, possibly fifty. Even if all the females in Sodom had been lesbians just as all men were homosexuals, they could not have possibly proved their homosexuality on this occasion by trying to rape publicly two strangers who were identified as men and whom the men wanted for the same reason. To argue, however, that the test referred only to men and the women were killed although they may not have been homosexual is to argue that the angels did kill the “righteous with the wicked” in spite of their firm commitment not to do so.

Fortunately, we do not need to stretch our imagination to figure out what “the sin” could have been because in everyday speech sexual language refers in all cultures to violence as its reality and not to sex. Therefore, the Sodomites wanted to kill the visitors and not to rape them. The motivation for their violent behavior is clearly spelled out in the text itself: “But they replied, ‘Stand back!’ And they said, ‘This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.’ Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down” (19:9). According to the text, “the sin” which the Sodomites were trying to do to Lot at this point was something “worse” than what they had intended to do to the strangers. What they tried to do to Lot at this moment was violence and not rape and the reason for their violence was that Lot was an alien himself which explains the reason the Sodomites were violent with the guests as well. Therefore, “the sin” was that of xenophobia, of killing strangers simply for daring to come to their city, and this is a sin of which even women and children can be guilty in all cultures, indeed, even the most civilized. That a whole city, including women, could become so intolerant that would want to kill any stranger who dares to venture in their midst is hard to imagine, but such a situation would be exactly what would explain and justify the kind of punishment administered to a city by a deity who makes a firm commitment to act only according to justice.

As this example shows, the failure to correctly identify the reality behind sexual language can lead to failures which can be quite embarrassing. This is not to say that whenever the Bible uses its euphemistic language for sex, it never refers to what people do in bed. Quite often, however, when people *know* each other it means that they are in bed, and when that happens, an explanation is given that they usually have a child. The mention of a child functions as a reality indicator. When the reality indicator is absent, however, the need to identify whether any reality blocker is present becomes the more important. The absence of a reality blocker does not guarantee that the language does not refer to sex just as it is the case with sexual language in ordinary speech.

Just as it is in the story about Sodom, sexual language is the language of violence and abuse in all cultures:

Perhaps no type of insult is so widespread and occurs in as wide a variety of cultures as the use of obscenity. From the most primitive tribal culture to the most complex industrialized society, obscene gestures and remarks, together with allegations and insinuations of sexuality nonconforming behavior, are a very common vehicle for the expression of insult.³

Sexual language is overwhelmingly male language and has to do with the natural aggressiveness of males: "Men can be hostile creatures, and swearing often allows them to exchange oaths instead of blows."⁴ Since profanities are rarely documented, I will rely in my illustrations on language which I witnessed in the Romanian culture in which I grew up, but I am sure that similar examples are found in all languages. Although sexual language is primarily male language used against males, occasionally a man who becomes angry with a woman would say that he wanted to copulate with her private parts, using profane words for both copulate and female private parts. No woman, however, would take such words as expressing any sexual interest. More frequently, however, when a man becomes angry with another man, he would say that he would copulate with the other man in the anus, again using the obscene words for copulate and anus. Although the language is clearly homosexual, it has absolutely no connection with the sexual orientation of either of the two men. This seems to be the case in the American culture as well:

Almost all dirty-word antiquarians agree with Gass that "Fuck you!" has very little to do with cupidity or heterosexual copulation, and indeed probably has much more to do with the abject humiliation of enforced buggery. "Fuck you" is a male curse, thrown like a brickbat at a deserving asshole. Thus, an evil turn of events or a sudden run of misfortune may be commemorated by the expression "Ain't that a fuck in the ass!"⁵

Although homosexual language used by men to express abuse against other men can be interpreted as reflecting their actual sexual life, the most abusive language often includes reality blockers which make it impossible to imagine that actual sex is contemplated. For instance, it is more offensive for a man to be told by someone that he would copulate with the private parts of his mother than with his anus, and this would be particularly offensive if the mother is no longer alive. Similarly, it would be extremely offensive for a man to be told by another man: "I would copulate with your

³ Charles P. Flynn, *Insult and Society: Patterns of Comparative Interaction* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977), 16.

⁴ Richard Dooling, *Blue Streak: Swearing, Free Speech, and Sexual Harassment* (New York: Random House, 1996), 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

mother's grave/church." Since such reality blockers make it impossible to imagine any sexual intercourse, the abusive and offensive meaning is the more emphatic.

Having reached this point, it is necessary to stop to emphasize a major difference between how ancient people understood reality and how language can be used to describe it compared to modern scholars. Ancient people understood that there were two kinds of reality: the reality of the things that *were out there*, and the reality of what we humans *thought and felt* about the things out there. The reality of *the things out there* represented what we now refer to as *objective reality*. Besides this, they realized that there was also a conceptualized or reasoned reality that we humans develop as a result of our ability to create systems of beliefs or thinking and which is the basis for what we do in the real world since they guide our behavior. To a large extent, our actions are not decided by the objective reality, but primarily by the reasoned reality that we adopt and structures our thinking. Ancient writers were not only aware of the two kinds of reality, but were careful to indicate which one they were talking about whenever they used language so that their readers would never be confused about the meaning of what they said. By contrast, the inability of modern scholarship to understand ancient texts is not due to the fact that modern people have a more accurate understanding of reality and how language can be used to properly describe it, but rather to the fact that modern people have a simplistic understanding of reality which acts like a handicap that prevents modern readers from understanding ancient writings and often even contemporary language. The literary device of reality blockers explains not only why it was so important and helpful for ancient readers to distinguish between the two kinds of reality, but also why ancient texts are so confusing for modern scholars. Sexual language is probably one of the best examples of how language can be used to describe both the objective reality of sex as well as the reasoned reality of hatred without the need of reality blockers, a kind of language which has been used with this dual function from ancient times in all cultures and languages. The objective reality has to do with what people do in bed when undressed; the reasoned reality has to do with what they do when they are out of bed and ready to fight. The first refers to what they do with their private parts, while the other with what they do with their fists and their guns. Because of the private nature of sexual behavior on the one hand, and the public nature of fighting and abuse on the other, sexual language almost never has to include a reality blocker to help others understand which reality it refers to. When used in public, sexual language almost never refers to sexual intercourse because sexual intercourse is almost never done in public when it is done for sexual gratification and not for display. Instances when explicit reality blockers are introduced in a story when sexual language is used as we saw in the story about Sodom are rare and unusual because in everyday language they are never necessary and therefore the intended meaning of the language is almost never missed. And if anyone is tempted to think that only ancient people used

language in this strange way as we saw in the story about Sodom, I would like to use an example that occurred in modern times and which was widely watched on TV all over the world. As some may remember, the final match of the 2006 Soccer World Cup took place between France and Italy. The match remained tied as the final minutes of the extended time were ticking when the French captain – who was also the best striker and the top scorer - barely missed an opportunity to score and win the coveted trophy. The main Italian defender, during the physical contact as a result of attempting to block the French attacker from scoring, grabbed him from his shirt, which is not allowed according to the rules of the game. The French attacker protested by telling his opponent that if he wanted his shirt, he could have it after the game was over, referring no doubt to the practice by soccer players of exchanging shirts after the match. To that, the Italian defender replied that he would rather have his sister than his shirt. The French player felt so offended by the sexual innuendo that reacted by hitting the Italian player with a head butt in the chest, resulting in his elimination from the game which crippled the French team. This incident eventually enabled the Italian team to win the match in the shoot-out in which the French captain - a top scorer - could not participate.

Like most sports, soccer belongs to the objective reality in the sense of objectively kicking an objective ball which has to be moved objectively on an objective field and objectively introduced in an objective net of an objective goal according to objective rules than can be objectively monitored by objective referees so that the result of the game can be objectively recorded in terms of the number of goals scored so that there is no doubt as to which team can play better soccer. If one tried to calculate all the money spent to organize and the money paid to watch all the matches between all the countries all over the world in order to qualify to participate in the playoffs, then all the money spent in order to organize a World Cup and all the matches between the countries qualified as well as the money spent to watch the games including the final match, the amount would be astronomical if it were possible to calculate. All this expense is made with the only objective of finding out which country has the best soccer team in the world at that time. After all the money spent to organize the World Cup, do we know which country, France or Italy, had a better team at playing soccer in 2006? Was the outcome of the match the result of how the players could objectively play the ball, or was the outcome of the match decided by how an Italian defender was able to use sexual language at a key moment of the game? As it turned out, the Italian player did not even know whether the French player had a sister, therefore his sexual language could not have meant that he wanted to have sex with the sister of his opponent. Although we do not know whether the exchange between the two players took place in French or in Italian, or both, there was no language barrier and no difficulty for the French player to understand that the Italian player provoked him to settle their encounter not in terms of playing a soccer ball, but in terms of physical violence, and

responded accordingly. Our inability to distinguish between objective reality and reasoned reality as well as the double function of the language to refer to either of them has rendered us not smarter than ancient people, but more vulnerable. I do not claim that the two players fully understood the meaning of what they said and of their actions. After all, they are trained to kick a ball and not to master theories of meaning. The hard to swallow fact is that modern experts on interpretation are in no better position to understand the meaning producing function of language than some soccer players are.

Although reality blockers as linguistic devices have not been identified and used by scholars in interpreting texts, the practice of bringing out the sexual reality behind biblical texts is a widespread procedure in postmodernist scholarship, an interpretive procedure which I would call *reality emphasizer*. Just as reality blockers can become emphatic, so also reality indicators can be emphasized. I define reality emphasizers the interpretive strategy of supplying any direct or implied reference to sex with graphic details of sexual activity as sexual abuse. I would like to use as an example the ritual provisions in Numbers 5:11-31 about a husband who is taken over by jealousy for suspecting his wife of being unfaithful without being able to prove her guilt:

If any man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him, if a man has had intercourse with her but it is hidden from her husband, so that she is undetected though she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her since she was not caught in the act; if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself; or if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, though she has not defiled herself; then the man shall bring his wife to the priest (5:12-15).

The ritual prescribed is:

Then the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD; the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. The priest shall set the woman before the LORD, dishevel the woman's hair, and place in her hands the grain offering of remembrance, which is the grain offering of jealousy. In his own hand the priest shall have the water of bitterness that brings the curse. Then the priest shall make her take an oath, saying, "If no man has lain with you, if you have not turned aside to uncleanness while under your husband's authority, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings the curse. But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority, if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has had intercourse with you," — let the priest make the woman take the oath of the curse and say to the woman — "the LORD make you an execration and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your uterus drop, your womb discharge; now may this water that brings the curse enter your bowels and make your womb discharge, your uterus drop!" And the woman shall say, "Amen. Amen." Then the priest shall put these curses in writing, and wash them off into the water of bitterness. He shall make the

woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her and cause bitter pain (5:16-24).

As the text makes clear, there is no sexual reality behind this ritual. Or, to be more exact, whatever sexual reality this ritual refers to is in the head of the husband. Not only there is no sexual reality behind the ritual, but there is no evidence that the ritual itself was ever practiced, as Alice Bach – who provides an interpretation of the ritual to which she refers as *torat sotah* – admits: “There are no recorded cases of the administration of the *torat sotah*.”⁶ Therefore, one would expect this law to be treated like the regulations about the jubilee year, regulations that have to do with theoretical possibilities rather than actual practice. In spite of her admission that the ritual did not deal with a guilt which actually happened or that the ritual was really practiced, her interpretation of almost anything in the ritual is sexual. The water which the woman drinks mirrors the semen of her possibly non-existent lover which probably never entered her womb: “Instead of her lover’s semen entering her, it is the water of judgment that streams into the woman.”⁷ The language of the ritual is explicitly sexual: “The Hebrew text is more vivid than the English translation: literally, ‘when God causes your thigh (*yarek*) to droop and your womb (*bitnek*) to swell’ (v. 21). These terms are suggestive of the sexual act. The word *yarek* is a commonly understood euphemism of sexual organs.”⁸

Although the “thigh” and the “womb” may refer to “sexual organs,” they do not necessarily refer to a “sexual act,” and to assume a sexual act when the female sexual organs “droop” and “swell” presupposes complete ignorance about what happens to female sexual organs during sexual intercourse. Even the priest who performs the ritual in the temple is viewed as a triple sexual partner of the women: God, the husband, and the possibly non-existing lover. The unbinding of the woman’s hair in the ritual reflects what happens in an actual sexual intercourse:

Unbinding the woman’s hair, and placing the husband’s jealousy offering (*minhat qena’ot*, v. 15) into her hands, the priest functions as proxy of the offended male, the husband, and of the deity whom the woman’s sexuality has taunted. Yet, as the male unbinding another man’s woman, he is also the mirror of the lover, touching the forbidden woman. The *minhat qena’ot* held in the wife’s hands symbolizes her potential danger, as the one holding and possibly controlling his sexuality. It can also echo the secret lover, whom she held instead of her husband, the sex that resulted in jealousy.⁹

⁶ Alice Bach, “Good to the Last Drop: Viewing the Sotah (Numbers 5:11-31) as the Glass Half Empty and Wondering How to View It Half Full,” in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 42.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

Accordingly, the jealousy did not result from the sick imagination of the husband, but from an actual sexual relationship with an actual lover. The vividness of the sexual language used in the interpretation of this ritual is surprising for those who are not familiar with contemporary biblical scholarship. That historical-critical scholars would try to stretch their imagination to see Jesus riding on two donkeys at the same time is understandable as long as the text clearly says so and the direct relationship between text and how things really happened is part of their fundamental presuppositions. When postmodernist scholars, however, fill in so much sexual reality in a text which explicitly presupposes the absence of it requires some explanation taking into account that they are not interested in historical reality. As the text makes clear, the ritual applies precisely when there is no evidence that illicit sex had taken place, otherwise more drastic measures were prescribed for a proven adulteress woman. Even if ancient people may have been naïve to believe that drinking water mixed with some dust could have had such harmful effects on the female body, contemporary biblical scholars can hardly be suspected of such ignorance. To see water (which is introduced in the stomach through the mouth) as similar to male sexual discharge (which is introduced in a woman's womb through her private parts) defies anything that we know about female anatomy. And even if we assume that ancient people were quite ignorant about human anatomy and assumed that the water and the semen eventually ended up in the same place somewhere in the womb, they must have been aware that the water was eventually discharged through the female private parts while the semen was introduced there instead and was not eliminated.

The reality emphasize to indicate sexual reality is used not only when there is some sexual reference to women, but even when actions are taken against men. For instance, in dealing with the Lot story, David M. Gunn does not just agree with other commentators that the Sodomites intended to rape Lot's guests, but goes further and argues that they wanted to rape Lot as well if they had not been prevented by Lot's visitors:

The narrator continues: "So they pressed at the man, at Lot, hard, and came close to breaking the door" (19:9). A glance at the imagery of locking and unlocking, opening, latches, and doors in the Song of Songs is enough to suggest a perverse double entendre here. Rapidly Lot himself has become the rape object. With the next sentence the narrator mischievously maintains our focus on the rapists and their new victim — "And the men put out their hands and brought Lot to them" — before adding words which completely redefine the sense — "(in)to the house, and shut the door." The "men" therefore become the visitors, the reaching out a rescue instead of the inflicting of more abuse, and the door is again literally a

door (though its closing against the attackers is also figuratively the closing of the door to Lot's body).¹⁰

If one is tempted to argue that these interpretations are just intellectual exhibitions of which only highly sophisticated minds like those of scholars are capable but which have nothing to do with how ordinary people think I would like to present a case that was widely covered by the media in which the steeple of a church is viewed as representing a male sexual organ:

A South African church is considering knocking down its newly built tower, after the preacher's wife called it a phallic symbol.

Cobie Swart wrote to the church council, saying that the steeple resembled a penis having "sexual relations with the goddess of the sky".¹¹

To view the Sodomites as homosexuals when they did use sexual language with reference to male persons is somewhat understandable, but to view a church steeple as resembling a male sexual organ requires quite a stretch of imagination. One may wonder what prevents people from seeing electricity poles and fence posts or even trees as male sexual organs and have them removed and banned. It may not be just coincidence that this idea that the church steeple represented a male sexual organ did not come from quite ordinary people but from the wife of a minister with whom the minister himself apparently agreed and both had been indoctrinated by current biblical scholarship. This inability of scholars to distinguish between the objective reality and the reality of ideas eventually becomes an *educated* inability which obliterates the common sense which has enabled people to distinguish between the two realities without being aware of devices such as reality blockers. Although cultic poles representing male sexual organs did exist in ancient religions, to connect them to Christian church steeples is a gross anachronism. Christianity emerged as an underground religion without any church buildings, let alone steeples, and developed large buildings with steeples as places of worship only after it became part of the imperial power to control the masses – hundreds of years after its emergence. But even then, steeples had nothing to do with male organ worship which had been eliminated from the society for a very long time. Although modern steeples are long and slender and arguably may look like a pointed pole, that is not how steeples looked when they became standard features of places of worship in the Roman Empire. As steeples on old church buildings prove, steeples were basically large domed ceilings which functioned

¹⁰ David M. Gunn, "Narrative Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed. Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 182.

¹¹ BBC, "'Phallic steeple' Row Rocks Cape Church," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3167870.stm>, (published 2003/10/06).

as huge acoustic amplifiers at a time when electronic voice amplification was not available, domes which may resemble female breasts rather than male sexual organs. The reverberated sound created in worshippers the feeling that they were in a place of unusual power before which they stood in awe since religion functioned to identify in the minds of people the earthly power with the divine authority. Steeples, therefore, traditionally had nothing to do with the reality of sex or even the power of men over women, but rather with the civil power over everyone. As electronic amplifiers became widely available, church steeples became cheaper slender pyramidal structures without any function except to identify a building as a church and as an instrument to reinforce government power and control.

The perception of many students and scholars that contemporary biblical scholarship is obsessed with sex to the point of seeing sex everywhere in the Bible and using language almost verging on pornography comes from a lack of understanding of postmodernist assumptions about reality. That there is this lack of understanding and appreciation for this kind of interpretation is confirmed by biblical scholars like Alice Bach herself when she complains: "What I find missing in the recent analysis is any acknowledgment of the consequence to the woman of shaking up the sexual/gender system."¹² How does she expect interpreters and readers to understand something – let alone "shake it up" – when the only explanation she offers about the relationship between sex and gender is a slash (/) and she misspells the word "systems" without an "s"? Even if "sex" is a "system," as long as she distinguishes it from "gender," there must be at least two systems. The problem may be deeper than just the spelling. It has to do with the fact that contemporary scholars have not developed adequate terminology and clear concepts to describe the way they handle texts and it is for this reason that I propose employing the concepts of reality to clarify the meaning.

Just as Abraham's lost donkey provided important clues about how biblical authors thought and wrote, so also the missing "s" from Alice Bach's "sexual/gender system" may provide important insights about how we, modern people, think and understand reality, or rather *misunderstand* it. If there is one thing that supposedly sets us, modern people, way above the ancient writers is the fact that we have acquired a sound understanding of reality which has enabled us to develop *scientific thinking* while ancient people had no idea what reality was, and therefore lived with fanciful ideas about reality that we label *mythical thinking*. We like to think that due to our clear understanding of reality, we know very well what we are talking about while ancient people didn't. So, when we talk about the "sexual/gender system," what are we really talking about? What really is the "sexual/gender system"? Well, we know what *sex* is

¹² Bach, 50.

and even children learn quite early in life: those private parts for humans and quite public for animals that are occasionally joined either because this behavior provides some gratification or results in the procreation of descendants similar to the parents that sustains the continuation of the species. Those private parts belong to the objective reality because they can be accurately observed and their activity can be documented using what is called the *scientific method of observation*. But what does *gender* refer too? Well, again, gender refers back to sex and somehow is another word for sex: The individuals which have the sex organ in a certain shape and use it in a certain way are called of the *masculine* gender and other individuals which have the sex organ of a different shape and is used in a different way are called of the *feminine* gender. But what about words such as pronouns that also have *gender* but do not have *sex* organs? Well, they don't, but if they refer to something that has the male sex organ, then they are *masculine*, but if they refer to something that has the female sex organ, then they are *feminine*, and if they refer to something that has neither, then they are neuter because their sex organs cannot be found and decided. So, eventually sex and gender are *one* system and if you know one, then you know the other.

At closer examination, however, the gender of words and the sex of animals do not quite match. A bull, for instance, has a male sex organ but the word "bull" is not of the masculine gender so that it is not replaced by the masculine pronoun "he" but rather by the neuter pronoun "it." Similarly, a cow has the female sex organ but the word "cow" is not of the feminine gender therefore it does not take the feminine pronoun "she" but rather the neuter pronoun "it" just like its opposite sex, the bull. When it comes to goats, however, things are getting even more confused. Here we do not have a separate word for the goat which displays a male sex organ and another word for a goat which displays a female sex organ, so that we use the same word for both, regardless of their sex organs, and if we do want to indicate that we are talking about a goat that has a male sex organ, then we would need to create a compound word "*he-goat*" just as we use the compound word "*she-goat*" to refer to a goat with the opposite sex organ. What is even stranger, even when we use the pronoun "he" to indicate the male goat, when the word "*he-goat*" is replaced by the personal pronoun, it is not replaced by the masculine pronoun "he" but rather by the same neuter pronoun "it." In other words, even a "*he-goat*" is not a "he" but an "it." And the same is true about the compound word "*she-goat*."

At least, so far we have talked about nouns which do have sex organs and one would expect that words that designate things which do not have sex organs at all to be of the neuter gender and be replaced by the neuter pronoun "it." Therefore, one would expect that a word like "country" to be of the neuter gender and take the neuter pronoun "it," but ... surprise, surprise, . . . although no country has any sex organs, the word

“country” is of the feminine gender and is replaced by the pronoun “she.” And if someone rushes to explain that a country may not have any sex organs but is thought of as being the mother of its inhabitants and therefore it rightfully receives the feminine pronoun, would also have to explain how come that the same country is referred to as “fatherland” and not as “motherland” and the word “fatherland” may take the pronoun “it” or “she” but never “he.”

At least the English language has a neuter gender that is used as a general rule for things which do not have sex organs, but there are languages like Hebrew which do not have a neuter gender at all and therefore any word, regardless whether it has any reference to sex or not, must be either of the masculine or the feminine gender. But even here, strange things happen. For instance, the words for “day” and for “night” are both of the masculine gender – although one may wonder why masculine and not feminine – but the word “night” has typically feminine endings both for singular and for plural. Could it be that at some point it was feminine and later had a *gender*-change operation since it could not have a *sex*-change operation? When it comes to Greek, although there is a neuter gender, the word for “day” and for “night” are both feminine and in Greek mythology day and night were viewed as female deities, more precisely as twin sisters, never being at home at the same time, one leaving the home while the other was coming in and vice-versa.

If the reader is already tired – if not downright confused – I have achieved my goal because I did all this discussion in order to raise the question about *the* system: Where is *the* system? A system presupposes some rules, but if the above examples prove any rule about the relationship between sex and gender, the only rule that can be discerned is that of complete arbitrariness. Granted, we may call *sex* a system as long as we have sexual partners equipped with dedicated body parts to perform specific functions that ensure the perpetuation of the species, but what system can there be when it comes to the gender of words in languages? If there is a gender system, it definitely cannot be found in the grammar although grammar does use gender. Could it be that such a system can be found in the *real* life?

In order to see how the two words, sex and gender, refer to two different kinds of reality, let us consider an activity that has been practiced in all cultures and at all times; cooking. It is a well-documented fact that in all cultures and at all times cooking has been done by women. This fact would be quickly explained using the concept of objective reality, the only one that we, modern thinkers, have: Women are the only ones who can cook because they are naturally endowed with this ability just as they are the only ones naturally endowed with the ability to give birth to children. Another fact that can be universally documented is that all expert cooks or *chefs* are men. If the ability to

cook has to be explained based on the objective reality, this *fact* that only men can be expert cooks or *chefs* would also have to be explained that men are naturally endowed only with the ability to cook sophisticated food but naturally are completely deprived of the ability to cook ordinary food. It is as if women can play chess, or football, or gymnastics at a beginner level and are never able to master any of these games at the expert or championship level, while men are completely unable to play these games at the beginner level but when they manage to play them, then they can only play them at the expert level. It is as if women were endowed with the ability to give birth to ordinary kids while men are completely unable to give birth to ordinary kids but only to extraordinary ones. That only women can give birth to children while men can never do it is a fact based on objective reality in the sense that women and men are equipped with different body parts so that who can give birth to children is not based on their decision but rather on an *objective* reality which exists independent of them. But when it comes to cooking, all the body parts involved in this activity belong equally to both men and women. In other words, as far as objective reality involved in cooking is concerned, both men and women are identically equipped. The obvious implication is that the ability of women to cook ordinary food and of men to be *chefs* cannot be based on some objective facts or reality. Moreover, the pattern can be observed beyond cooking. Most teaching at home is done by mothers, but most university professors are men. Most religious instruction at home is done by women, but religious activities in religious institutions are done by men – often exclusively. This pattern can be noticed even in institutions and organizations. Most workers who do the sewing in a cloth factory are women, while those who run the factory and decide what the women should do and how to do it are men. Most singers and instrument players at concerts are women but their directors are males. Most dancers are women but their choreographers are men. Almost all secretaries are females while bosses are regularly males. Similarly, most nurses are females, while most medical doctors are males. How do we explain these facts using our concept of objective reality, the only reality which is *real* and has enabled us to have our *scientific thinking* that provides accurate explanation of *facts*? Well, females are naturally endowed with fine hands and fingers and therefore they are naturally endowed with the ability to master the fine strokes on a keyboard that typing requires or to administer the medication in fine doses, while men have heavy and clumsy hands and fingers unfit to match the fine movements that only female fingers can do. The same is true when it comes to handling a needle for sewing, or using a sewing machine, or playing an instrument, and so on. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that females use mascara while men don't. The reason men do not emphasize the shape of their eyes or eyebrows with mascaras is not because they are not interested in their beauty – or *handsomeness* – but because they are objectively endowed with clumsy hands and fingers and not with fine hands and fingers like women that enable them to make the fine movements required to use a mascara stick to get the dark stuff

on the eyelashes and not in the eyes. But when it comes to surgery and the fine and accurate movements that using a sharp scalpel requires, suddenly the fine hands and fingers with which females are *naturally* endowed become completely inadequate and the clumsy hands and fingers with which males are *naturally* endowed become perfectly fit! Male hands are too clumsy to handle a mascara stick but expert at handling a scalpel just as male hands are too clumsy to handle a frying pan at home but are expert at handling it in a cooking show! How do we explain these *facts* using our concept of objective reality, the only one which we understand, of which we are so proud because it has enabled us to develop *scientific thinking* that places us way above ancient people when *explaining* things? Granted, we admit that we do not know why a word like “day” is masculine in Hebrew and feminine in Greek and explain that when it comes to the gender of words, some arbitrary decisions were made that had nothing to do with sex, but when it comes to *facts* about cooking, teaching, worshipping, medical care, and so on – where we see the same pattern in all societies and at all times that separates what males and females can do – these cannot be explained on some arbitrary decisions or on some *objective* reality such as sex organs as long as these activities have nothing to do with sex. Such universal rules must be part of some system because, after all, that’s what a system is; rules, isn’t it? The obvious implication is that all these *facts* must be the result of some decisions which were made using some *reason*. In other words, there must be a *reason* why societies decided that only females *can* cook at home but only males *can* be *chefs*. There must be a *reason* why only females can administer medication to patients but only males can decide what medication they need. There must be some *reason* why females use makeup and males don’t. There must be some *reason* why females are so good at entertainment such as playing music and dancing while males don’t. To argue that these are not *facts* and therefore they do not belong to *reality* because we cannot see some object called “cooking,” or “typing,” or “sewing,” or “discrimination,” that our smart scientists can place under their microscopes and other gadgets that they use to study what *really* exists through objective observation using their *scientific thinking* is to invite ridicule. It may be true that “cooking” or “discrimination” do not exist as rocks do so that such things do not really exist for scientists even when they happen right under their nose, but to claim that things like “cooking” or “discrimination” are not *real* would make ancient people wonder whether we, modern people, call our thinking *superior* because we do not want to call it what it is; stupidity. And our inability to conceive that things like cooking, painting, discriminating, and so on, are not *real* and therefore they do not exist brings us to the key difference between the way we, modern people, think and how ancient people did. According to our understanding, *existence* is something that resides in the things themselves, and therefore the things that exist are those that exist by themselves and independent of anything else. The way our smart philosophers put it is that things that really exist are the ones which have existence *in themselves*. For instance, a rock or a tree

are real and they really exist because they *have* existence in themselves and do not depend on anything else in order to exist. But what about things like “cooking,” or “making love,” and so on? Well, since they do not have existence in themselves they are just *contingent* and therefore they do not really exist. They are contingent because they depend on something else to exist such as humans. Such things exist because humans want to do them, and they exist only as long as humans do them, but otherwise they can never exist. If we do discover somewhere that some “cooking” is done, we will notice that that “cooking” exists because some humans do it, but as soon as humans no longer do it, then no one can find “cooking” anywhere anymore. And this insight that reality is made of only things that have existence in themselves and that only such things really exist has enabled us, modern people, to develop a truly superior thinking that has made it possible for us for the first time in history to develop what we call *the academia*, the culmination of human learning. It is claimed that this revolutionary understanding of what existence is has laid the foundation for the development of science that has enabled humanity for the first time in history to achieve true knowledge. Only things which truly exist, that is, which have existence in themselves – such as rocks, trees, black holes, etc. – properly qualify to be objectively studied in order to attain genuine knowledge and on this foundation our academia is built. *Science* may be divided in several departments depending on the objects it investigates: some study rocks, others study trees, others study chemicals, and so on, but they are all called *sciences* because they are part of the same *science*. To emphasize that they are *real* sciences they are called *hard* sciences because the knowledge which they achieve are as solid as the hardest rocks. But what about other things which people study in universities, such as painting, music, preaching, languages, and so on? Well, these are not sciences but ... *humanities*. The reason they are called humanities is because humans do them and they exist only to the extent that humans do them. Not having their own existence or existence *in themselves*, they exist as humans do them and therefore there is no science about how to do them and consequently they are called *arts*. What makes an artist an artist is the fact that is very good at doing something without being able to explain what is doing or teach others how to do it. True, others may be able to imitate an artist, but whatever imitators are doing, it is never art. Yes, scientists can explain in the slightest details what they are doing, why they do it, and what are the results of what they are doing, but when it comes down to arts, it just happens that women are artists at cooking at home, men are experts at being *chefs*, women master the art of typing, men master the art of directing, women master the art of teaching in kindergarten while men that of teaching in universities, and so on.

These *humanities* that study what human do may be *arts* and as arts they may escape any rational investigation, but when women always do the part which gets less money and men do the part which gets more money, that no longer looks like *art* but rather

like *system*. It is this aspect of human societies which Alice Bach referred to and wanted to change when she talked about the “sexual/gender system” that needs to be “shaken up.” By “shaken up” she really meant “turn it upside down,” or rather “upside up” because the system with men on top is already “upside down.” Alice Bach would call it *system* and not *reality* because, being a scholar, shares with all the other scholars the understanding that the only reality that exists is the objective reality and therefore, discrimination and abuse against women cannot belong to any *reality* but must belong to some *system*. And if feminists like Alice Bach were asked how this *system* ended up upside down, their answer is straightforward; sex. Females happen to have a body part which males happen to like very much while it not only does not provide any pleasure or enjoyment to women when it involves men, but only pain. In other words, women have the cookie for which men salivate all the time, and in order to get the cookie and enjoy it any time they want and as much as they want, they set themselves as bosses while make women their subordinates so that they can enjoy the female cookie without women to be able to resist. Granted, at work people do not usually have sex, but even there, men have to be bosses so that women obey their orders and fulfill their wishes not only at work, but in bed as well. Although women are not interested in sex and do not enjoy it, men want women to pretend that they actually want sex and would do anything to entice a man to be interested in them. Men wear pants because they are practical and although pants cover their legs, men are not interested to show off their legs to get a female interested in them because the last thing on the mind of a man is to have sex with a woman. Instead, women *have chosen* to wear skirts no matter how clumsy and unpractical they may be, because skirts allow for parts of the legs to be seen and that may make men want to see more and salivate to get the cookie. And if skirts got shorter and shorter, it was not because men – who just happen to be fashion designers for women – wanted to see more of the legs, but because women got more eager to get men interested in having sex with them so that they started to uncover more and more of their legs almost down, or rather up, to the cookie. And if women have a wardrobe full of dresses in all shapes and colors and like to change them sometimes several times a day while man just seem not to care what they put on, is again because men are completely uninterested in the female cookie and wouldn't move a finger to get the attention of a woman, but women are just desperate to get a man interested in them and that's the reason they go to such expenses when it comes to how they dress. And if women spend a lot of time to put on makeup while men never use it is again because they want to attract men. Females are so good at music and dancing and entertainment because they want to get the bored men think not only of their work but also of some sex with women because sex provides women with so much fun.

No matter how much men would like to think that this is how things *really* are, feminists denounce this as a show or a game set up by men and imposed upon women to serve their obsession with the female cookie and to cover up their interests, and women play this game because they have no choice since they have no power. Females may have the cookie, but men have the power, and as long as men have the power, they have not only the cookie, but everything else. Females may have the cookie, but since they do not have the power, they end up having nothing. Not only women do not get any enjoyment from their own cookie, but they have to pretend that they actually want men to have their cookie more badly than men do, play the game of enticing men and even become experts at smiling as if they were the happiest people on earth while men can hardly manage a frowning smile as if they were the most unfortunate people in the universe. Not only women have to suffer all the abuses from men, but they even have to provide *entertainment* as if they are the ones who have all the fun. It is a system set up by men so that they have everything they want and women have nothing, while pretending that things are exactly the opposite. It is this system that feminists want to “shake up.” This is a “sexual system” because men set it up as a result of their obsession with sex. It is a screwed-up system meant to satisfy the sexual interests of men that is found only in human societies and is virtually without parallel in the animal world. There, the system is upside-up, that is, with the female on top. There, it is not the females that put on pretty colors to get the attention of males but it’s the males that have to get a pretty wardrobe while females regularly have the dullest colors. There, it is not the females that provide *entertainment* with all kinds of songs and dancing in order to attract a sexual partner, but it is the males. There, it is not the males that decide when to have sex and with whom, but it’s the females. There, it is not the males that are picky, but the females. Since female animals have known all the time about genes and that their offspring get some of their genes from the dumb males, because they did not have computers to analyze the genes of males in order to make sure that their offspring gets the best genes, developed a more practical way of finding out which males carry the best genes; have them fight with one another. If males have to use abuse in order to get to the cookie, why use violence against females when they can use it against one another? And if males get some bruises in the process, that is just a fair price to pay for enjoying the cookie. And there, it is not the females that have to do the hard and dirty work of maintaining a house while the male watches from his perch as boss, but it is the males who work hard to build the nicest nests while the female watches the struggles of the males as a referee. There, a black-widow spider is smart enough to realize that a male is nothing more than a sex toy and understands that after the sex is over, a male spider is good for nothing except for a snack.

It is these things that do not belong to *objective* reality and the academia call “humanities” or “arts” while feminist scholars call “system” that I decided to designate

by the term *reasoned reality*. I chose to call them *reality* because they are as real as the rocks, trees, electrons, and all the stuff that hard scientists are fascinated about. And I call the reality made up by such things as *reasoned* because these things do not exist in themselves, but exist because humans decide to make them, and humans decide to make them because they have a *reason* for which they are interested in them. If someone finds that somewhere some *cooking* is done, will discover that those who do it, they do it either because they want to eat what is being cooked or they want to throw it at each other because they want the food on themselves rather than in their stomachs. The same goes for teaching, preaching, making love, sports, fishing, and so on. One does not need to find a reason why rocks, or stars, or planets, or fossils exist. It is true that most ancient people thought that even those things exist for a reason – that is, some deity wanted them and therefore created them – but truly enlightened people today know that they do not need this unnecessary assumption of a deity because they know that there is no reason for anything to exist, not even for the whole universe, and therefore they proudly call themselves atheists or agnostics. The things that humans do, however, they exist because humans have a reason to do them, and they do them only as long as they have a reason. For instance, there was a time when humans started to write on leather and thus parchment came into existence. The reason parchment came into existence was that papyrus became hard to find due to political circumstances, so humans had to come up with an alternative. And if parchment is today virtually unavailable, there is also a reason, namely, that it is too expensive while better and cheaper alternatives are available. And if women can cook at home but cannot be *chefs*, there is also a reason, namely, that men are obsessed with a certain cookie which women happen to have.

Feminists may not have clear concepts and terminology to describe this “system” that always sets men above women and discriminates against them, but they do deserve the credit for bringing these facts to the attention of the whole world. Yes, there is a “gender system” that sets individuals whom are identified as *men* above individuals whom are identified as *women*. And the *reason* or justification for the “gender system” seems to have to do with the interest which men have in sex therefore it seems that there is one system which can be called the “sexual/gender system.” Although this explanation seems to be based on common sense, I find a major problem with it; it implies the universal stupidity of women. If female bears are smart enough to realize that they have something that male bears would die for and would not let them touch it until they set up a good fight so that the female bear can decide which male deserves the coveted treat and allows that male bear to have sex with her – or rather “it” – how come that for millennia, no woman has ever had enough brains to come to this realization until the eyes of women were opened by feminists like Jack Derrida, Sigmund Freud, and other males towards the end of the last millennium? If even a female black-widow spider has

enough brains to realize that a male spider is useless after the copulation, how come that humans to whom females belong and are tooted as having the best brains have not been able to come to that realization for such a long time? Granted, there is plenty of stupidity in the world, not just in ancient times, but in modern times as well, both among women as well as among men. But what I will always reject – and I will do it more than once during these studies – is *universal stupidity*. By *universal stupidity* I mean the assumption that during all past millennia, not one single individual was able to understand something which we today consider just plain common sense. I have no difficulty to imagine that there were some men smart enough to think of a system in which men have the power so that they could get women to submit to their sexual desires as they wanted and that women even pretended that they enjoyed playing along with the system, but what I find impossible to imagine is that NO women ever understood that men were actually interested in their sex until the end of the second millennium A.D. when their eyes were opened by other men whom feminists regard as their patriarchs. Therefore, the feminist explanation of the “sexual/gender system” may be based on common sense, but is a common sense which makes no sense. Since it is a fact that human societies have set up a system in which men have the power and since such a system belongs to the reasoned reality and therefore must have a reason, that reason needs to be found rather than assumed.

In finding an alternative explanation for “the system” I start from the supposed universal stupidity of women. If such stupidity cannot be imagined, could it be that women went along with “the system” not because they were idiots and did not understand the system and what was going on, but realized that “the system” was beneficial to them in some ways so that the price they paid was small compared with the benefits? The idea that discrimination may have benefits would not doubt be met with an outcry of indignation, but indignation – particularly scholarly indignation – only blocks clear thinking rather than help it. That men are interested in sex and use sexual language all the time – unlike women who almost never use sexual language even when are interested in sex – no one can deny, but when sexual language is used, which reality does it refer to: the reality of sex, or the reality of violence? We come back now to the story about Sodom and its reality blockers. Because ancient people were aware of the fact that there are two kinds of reality – what we call objective reality and what I have labeled reasoned reality – they felt the need to use reality blockers to distinguish between the two even if they did not have technical words to label them. Moreover, in everyday language people use common sense so that they would never take the sexual language of men to refer to sexual interests when violence is meant. But when it comes to the academia, even a description of a ritual becomes a graphic description of a sexual encounter. This understanding that sexual language used by men can refer not necessarily to sex, helps us realize that no matter how interested men

may be in sex, there is something else they are even more fascinated with; violence. And regardless of how much women may be interested or uninterested in sex, there is something they are as fascinated with as men; violence. It is violence, and not sex, that humans – both males and females – are truly obsessed with. And it is violence that has caused both males and females to set up a *system* by which men have the power and women are marginalized so that humans can develop their potential to kill to the maximum. And this imbalance does have to do with sex, but not with what happens during the sexual intercourse, but months later. Regardless whether women enjoy sex or not, often sex results in pregnancy and it is always the women who get pregnant while men never do. This reality has important implications for the potential of violence: men can develop their potential to kill to the maximum while women are handicapped. As far as violence is concerned, pregnancy is tremendously incapacitating for women. After just several months of pregnancy, a woman not only loses all ability to be aggressive, but would try to avoid any violence because it could cause a miscarriage. And after giving birth, a woman would be even more interested in avoiding any violence in order to protect the child until is old enough to fend for itself. By then she would have gone through several cycles of pregnancy and nursing and by the time she is no longer surrounded by children of which to take care, she is too old to be capable of any aggression. Violence presupposes physical fitness and regular training, a pursuit of which only men can dedicate themselves to because they are never incapacitated by pregnancies. And the concept of violence explains why men ended up having the *power*. Well, power means primarily to have the potential to use violence and ultimately to kill. Granted, exercising power does not necessarily mean always to kill because violence takes all the shades, from the mildest, to the most serious; death. It may start with verbal abuse, such as swearing using sexual language, but if submission is not achieved with just verbal abuse, then it may take more serious forms, such as depriving one of a job and a of salary to make the victim aware of the potential that the abuser has to bring death through starvation, and if that still does not work, eventual bring the death by more violent means. Power without the potential to cause suffering, harm, and ultimately death is meaningless. Therefore, the decision of human societies that men should have the power has not been an arbitrary decision of men as a result of their supposed obsession with sex as feminists claim, but rather with the tremendous potential for killing which men can develop as a result of the fact that naturally they are never incapacitated by pregnancies and are not burdened with taking care of children. No one can question that men have used violence against women and that women have been victims of violence, not just sexual, but physical as well, but what feminists are suspiciously silent about is the violence which men do against other men. The brutality that men can use against other men is without parallel among even the cruelest beasts. Unlike beasts that kill when they are hungry and only as long as they are hungry, the human beasts kill primarily when they are well fed and kill primarily those who are the

poorest and less likely to resist and use violence. Those who cause most killing today is done by the most affluent countries and those who are killed are among the poorest. Even on continents like Africa, one can see images of people, including children, starving to death but never carrying any guns or having any violent intentions, while all the fighters in conflicts of which the whole continent is full, whether those fighters are shown engaged in battles or just dead from fighting, they are always well fed, well dressed, and equipped with advanced weapons. Skinny and hungry fighters are virtually unheard of. And somehow scholars, including feminists, never see any of these facts or realities. They can see very well violence in a ritual in which a priest unbinds a woman's hair and makes her drink some water mixed with some dust, or people are outraged at the idea of a church steeple which in their imagination resembles a male penis which might rape a goddess of haven in the existence of which they do not believe anyway, but become suddenly completely blind when comes to seeing the greatest bestiality which can be imagined and which is not found even in the animal world, one that is done by men against other men including many females and even children as *collateral damage*. Therefore, my complaint against feminists is not about the abuses which they denounce, but about even greater abuses that they are suspiciously silent. Yes, men have committed and are committing a lot abuses against women, but can anyone imagine the kind of abuses and violence that men have committed against other men? And are not the very men who are the greatest killer who are also the most violent with women as well? Although men have abused women, societies have never endorsed such abuses and regularly have condemned them even if the abuses are rarely punished. But when it comes to the violence of men against other men, such violence not only has been condoned by all societies – particularly the most *civilized* – but it has been *cultivated* and held in the highest esteem. There is no human activity in which societies – particularly the most *civilized* – have put so much money as military training and equipment to enable males to kill other people as much as possible. And this violence is not just cultivated, but is held in the highest esteem, not only by men, but by women as well, including religious groups such as Christians. Those who kill men not only are never looked upon as abusers, but are actually held as the greatest heroes, are offered the highest honors and medals, and the most solemn national holidays are dedicated to them. The cultivation of violence, however, goes beyond military camps. Modern sports are nothing but mocked battles. The most enjoyed sports – by both men and women, even children – are the most violent and they are regularly played by men. Moreover, women are not just spectators, but a very important part of the game. Besides the players on the field, there are teams of virtually naked young and sexy women called *cheerleaders* placed behind the goals whose purpose – as their name makes clear – is to motivate the players in their mocked battle to defeat their adversaries by scoring, and when players manage to score, the women reward them by moving their breasts and their bottoms in ways that no male would fail to understand

that they are promised the most enjoyable cookie that females can offer as rewards for their *bravery*. Sports as mocked fights embody an ideal not only for sport fans, but even for schools and universities. One would expect universities to be famous for intellectual activities, but what they are known and famous for are ... their sports. The level of intellectual achievements of a university is measured through the achievements of its athletes as fighters who spend almost all their time in cultivating their muscles and have virtually no time left for cultivating their brains. And at graduation ceremonies when degrees are conferred, the procession is opened by the master of the ceremony who carries a ... mace – an ancient weapon in the form of a club to smash heads. One would expect those who graduate a university to be experts at using their brains, but as the ritual of the commencement ceremony makes clear, they are actually qualified to handle a mace to smash human heads. Consequently, education is not about learning, but is primarily about power. And power means primarily the ability to cause harm and violence, that is, to crush heads. Therefore, the “sexual/gender system” is not primarily about sex, but is primarily about power. It is a power system into which graduation is the initiating ritual and which has been dominated by men for most of the past history and from which females have been largely excluded. It is this power system which feminists want to “shake-up” but do not want to abolish. They want to “shake-up” the system and not to abolish it because females like the power system as much as men do, and they just want to “shake-it-up” so that they get to the top and enjoy the power. And that brings us to the key question: Why is power so desired, not only by men, but even more so by women? Since the power system is the basis for what I called *reasoned* reality that includes everything that is done for a reason, what is the reason power is so much desired? The answer is surprisingly simple: The reason power is so universally desired is that when you have the power, you do not have to offer any reason or justification for whatever you do. When you have the power, the only reason you can offer for anything you do is “I want it.” It is a kind of reasoning at which not only women, but even children can be experts.

To turn to the Bible – and particularly to Genesis – to expose and expand our narrow-minded and supposedly *scientific* view of reality can only be met with ridicule by scholars. After all, we modern people take great pride in our *scientific* thinking as the only true and accurate understanding of reality to which ancient people could not possibly rise because of their *mythical* or fanciful minds. Mike Ball relates that at one time the famous scholar Robert Alter – who pioneered literary approaches to the Bible¹³ – once quipped that those who wrote the Bible assumed that scholars who would read those texts were idiots. What he meant was that scholars have found in the Bible such absurdities that those who wrote it must have assumed that the readers were simply

¹³ Robert Alter, *The art of Biblical narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

idiots and completely unable to spot even the grossest contradictions and inconsistencies. Consequently, only idiots can accept what those ancient writers said, and although ancient readers may have been such idiots, modern scholars cannot be expected to be so gullible. That biblical writers assumed that their readers – including modern scholars – would be idiots we do not know, but what Alter's statement makes clear is what modern scholars think about those who wrote the Bible, that is, that they must have been idiots in order to write such stupidities that simply defy common sense. How else can be qualified but idiots those who wrote Genesis without noticing that telling how the world was created by one deity in the first chapter, completely forgot about it and in the next chapter tells a completely different story about the same creation but done by a different deity? And what else can be called but idiots those who read those stories for thousands of years without noticing the absurdity until modern scholars came up with what is called *critical scholarship*?

Although I do not claim that modern scholars are idiots, I do not assume that those who wrote the Bible were idiots either. Modern scholars may be arrogant, but definitely not idiots. I do not believe that people can be aware of all their presuppositions but there is a presupposition that I am fully aware of and I already made it clear: I have a hard time to accept when a claim is made that for thousands of years people without exceptions have been idiots and not able to notice something that is a matter of common sense today until someone quite recently was smart enough to notice the stupidity. I already made clear what I think about this presupposition when I rejected the fundamental claim made by feminists that for thousands of years, no woman was smart enough to realize that men seized the power and used it for their own purposes including to abuse and marginalize women. That there have been a lot of stupid people who read the Bible – both in ancient as well as in modern times – I would fully agree but that humanity has been made of 100% idiots until Julius Wellhausen came along I find it unthinkable.

That ancient writers had different assumptions about those who read their texts than modern people is quite understandable, but I am afraid that their assumptions were exactly opposite from our own. When we write something, we assume that anyone is able to read, and whoever is able to read, would be able to understand without any difficulty because meaning is conveyed by the words instantly without any effort on the part of the reader so that the reader is just a passive recipient because all the effort in making the meaning clear had been made by the writer. It should be obvious that for ancient writers such assumptions would have been hard to imagine. That everyone should be able to read probably ancient writers would have found unthinkable. Moreover, they did not think that reading is just a form of entertainment like listening to music or as reading is for most modern people. Not only writing was not intended for everyone and the ability to read was not expected from everyone, but because

literacy was the privilege of the most educated minds, ancient writers assumed that only the most intelligent people would read it, indeed, would have access to what has been written. Unlike modern writing which assumes no effort on the part of the reader to understand what is intended by the author, ancient writers assumed that even the most intelligent people would make an effort to understand a text. A fundamental difference between ancient and modern texts is that in ancient texts meaning was not as plain as it is in modern writing. One reason for this fundamental difference is that ancient writers did not have the luxury of an abundance of words as it is the case with modern writing. This was not due to the fact that ancient languages lacked words or that ancient writers could not write extensively, but to the fact that writing had to be extremely economical with words because writing was done on materials like leather which was very expensive and made texts bulky. To help some dumb readers with extra words and details to make sure that they did not miss the meaning was not their concern not only because that would have made their writing expensive and bulky, but because they did not expect that such readers would ever read anything anyway. If they did have rules about writing, the most important one must have been: whatever can be inferred by an intelligent reader from what has been already stated in the text, must be left out because it was the primary responsibility of the reader to make intelligent inferences and figure out from what has been said what had not been said but would make the meaning consistent with the details already provided. Strange as it may sound, the readers were guided in discovering the meaning by *inconsistencies*, but inconsistencies not *in the text itself*, but rather by inconsistencies *in their reading of the text*. Unlike modern scholars, ancient readers did not confuse the text with their reading of the text and therefore whatever inconsistencies they discovered when reading a text, they did not assume that those inconsistencies were *in* the text, but they assumed that the inconsistencies must be in their *reading* of the text. Therefore, whenever they discovered contradictions or inconsistencies, they did not re-write the text as scholars do assuming that the inconsistencies were placed in the text by a dumb writer or editor, but rather re-read the text looking for some details in the text that they had missed but would stir them in a different direction with the reading and would eliminate the contradiction. In other words, whenever a reader discovered that there were inconsistencies in reading a story, those inconsistencies functioned as red flags alerting the intelligent reader that the reading has gone wrong and a new effort needed to be made in order to relate the details in the story so that the contradiction disappeared. They used this strategy because their assumption about those who wrote the text was exactly the opposite of that of Robert Alter and other modern scholars: they assumed that ancient writers were extremely intelligent and not idiots. Just as they could not take a reality blocker as an accurate description of reality assuming that the writer could not distinguish between reality and imagination, they also could not assume that an inconsistency in a story was the result of a dull writer who scribbled words on scrolls

without much thought, but rather the inconsistency was the result of the inability of the reader to properly relate all the details in order for the reading to become fully consistent, and when they arrived at a reading that was free of inconsistencies, that was the proof that they had properly understood the story. To summarize, ancient readers used a completely different strategy when reading a text: While modern scholars take their discovered *inconsistencies* in a text as proof that the author was quite stupid and then would reconstruct the text to its supposedly original condition basically re-writing the text, ancient readers revised their own reading until all the inconsistencies disappeared and then they knew that they have reached the meaning which was intended by the author. Of course, this required much intellectual effort and re-reading of the text many times. Ancient readers did not take meaning for granted because they knew that reading was a quest that required effort and time.

Ancient writers tried to cram as much meaning in as few words as possible not only to keep the size of their texts to a minimum for practical purposes, but for political reasons as well. Although powerful rulers – both ancient and modern – like to be extolled as the wisest people, intelligence and power do not quite go together. In ancient times rulers were overwhelmingly illiterate and in modern times their intellectual abilities rarely rise above average. In ancient times rulers had scribes who read and wrote for them just as in modern times politicians just read in front of cameras texts prepared by others that are displayed on monitors never shown on cameras. And even when modern rulers give a *live* interview, they are actually giving answers to questions which they had painstakingly rehearsed in private with their coaches and use learned tricks to avoid questions they do not like and offer instead their favorite answers often disregarding the question altogether. There is, however, an important difference between ancient and modern writers who write for the powerful: While modern writers are interested only to say what those in power like and no one will ever know what they really believe or even who they are, the biblical writers were also interested to convey their message which those in power did not like in such a way that it sounded quite benign at a superficial reading – the only one which rulers were able to understand – while those who were intelligent and educated could understand what the powerful missed. This is what has made the Bible such a unique book: on the surface it looks like any book that is full of all the goodies that both ordinary and powerful people like very much such as killing, sex, deceit, abuses of all kinds, and so on. These are the things that have made it survive. But at the same time, it has embedded in it some of the most disturbing ideas which inspired the only true revolutionaries and true revolutions in history. It cannot be just a coincidence that the only civilization that is known as Western civilization developed in Protestant Christianity, that part of Christianity that started with the stated goal of making the scripture the only authority and eventually paved the way for its translation in vernacular making it possible even for ordinary people to read it.

Whether it is about Jesus, or Martin Luther, or Martin Luther King Jr., or liberation of women by feminists, they all got their ideas from the Bible via Protestant Christianity. That is what has made the Bible the most burned book in history. And that is what makes it the most hated book in the world: by scholars, by American blacks, by feminists, by atheists, and more recently by most *enlightened* Christians who still profess to be Christians. This irrational hatred may be the result of an instinctual fear that this book may still have hidden in it things that could open up the eyes of people to things that those who have the power do not want them to understand.

When it comes to Genesis, however, everyone knows that its purpose was to provide ancient people with an explanation of how the world came into being and why the world was the way people observed it. Those who read this book today understand that it says what ancient people also understood and even believed, that is, that everything they could find in the world had been created by a deity in six days through speaking. If ancient people saw sheep and lions and fruit trees in the world and wondered where they came from and why they were the way they were, this book provided them with the answer: God made everything exactly the way anyone could observe it and that enabled people to be satisfied with the world as it was, knowing that it had been set up by a deity who was absolute. This understanding seems to be so much common sense that to suggest that ancient people would have found it laughable can only be met with ridicule. Although a dialogue between ancient and modern people is not possible in reality, such a dialogue is not difficult to imagine. If ancient people were alive today and were told that they understood that Genesis explained how everything that is found in the world was created by God in six days, they most likely would be extremely surprised. If ancient people lived today they would notice that there are a lot of things in the world that did not exist in ancient times – such as cars, computers, airplanes, and so on – but they would also find things that they themselves had although now they look different, such as houses. One possible question they could ask is: If you think that Genesis claims that everything that we find in the world was created by God during the first six days, in which day did God create our houses and your houses not to mention your cars or bombs or computers? As Robert Alter suggested, modern people would answer that ancient people were too stupid to ask such questions. Because of their *mythical* thinking, they were too narrow minded to realize that the way in which the world was described in Genesis and the way in which the world really was did not match at all. And this is where my bias against the universal stupidity of ancient people kicks in. Just as I believe in the widespread stupidity of both men and women but I cannot believe in the *universal* stupidity of *all* women over millennia, so also, I can believe in a widespread stupidity of readers – both ancient and modern – but I cannot believe in the *universal* stupidity of all readers before Wellhausen. Therefore, this ancient text must be approached not based on how we believe ancient people read it,

but rather based on what the text actually says with the assumption that whoever wrote it, must have been extremely intelligent and expected readers to use similar intelligence when reading it.

Having reached this point it is important to be clear about what the text specifically says that God did create and what the text does not say that God created. As any reading would make clear, God created the land, the seas, the mountains, the sun, the moon, the stars, the plants, and the animals – both the ones living on the land, in the water, and in the air. Even a simple mind would easily realize that the author of Genesis describes here what we would call the *natural world*. But even the dumbest mind would have been aware that the world was not made up just by what we call the natural world. Ancient people must have noticed that they could find in the world spears, bows, arrows, carts, knives, pots, furniture, fences, tents, houses, and so on, and Genesis nowhere says that God created any of them. Of course, ancient readers expected the text to explain where all these things came from and would have looked carefully in the text for an answer. And on the sixth day after the creation of the natural world was finished, the text says:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’” (Gen 1:26).

After the natural world is finished, the creator decides to create someone in the image of the creator. Someone who is like the creator is obviously someone able to do what the creator does; create. After God created the natural reality, creates someone able to create reality. Scholars have endlessly debated what this “image” might be, but plain common sense would have helped anyone understand that the “image” in which humans were created must be exactly the image which one gets about God from how God is described in the preceding verses, that is, God is a creator. One of the unique features of the biblical religion is not only that no one has ever seen God, but even a visual representation of God is strictly forbidden. As the above text makes clear, God does have an image and the chapter focuses exclusively on describing God, but all the description is limited strictly to the actions and activities of God without even the slightest hint about what God might look like. Consequently, the only “image” one can get from this *description* of God is of what God *does* and how he does what he does, but no visual detail. Just because our minds understand the word “image” to refer exclusively to visual details, we are unable to understand that we can have an “image” of someone when no visual details are provided even when we are provided with ample descriptions of what someone is doing. This observation may provide the answer why visual representations of God are strictly forbidden in the biblical religion: images are static and therefore are a hindrance rather than a means to help people arrive at an

“image” of an active deity. The biblical God does not want to be judged or understood through some static images, but rather solely and purely from his actions. And the actions described in the first chapter do provide quite a clear image of God.

The very first thing Genesis declares is that God created the world. We are told that the first act was to create light, that light was called day and darkness was called night, that there was evening and there was morning, and that was the first day. Here modern readers start to lough about what an idiot this writer must have been not to realize that evenings and mornings are produced by the rising and the setting of the sun so that there was no need for God to create any light on the first day and then create the sun on the fourth. Not only was the writer a complete idiot, but so were also billions of readers over millennia who kept reading this text without noticing that what the text described and what they could see in the real world did not match at all. It is claimed that this is unquestionable proof that ancient people completely lacked any ability to observe reality and make the most obvious connections among facts due to their *mythical thinking* that placed a chasm between their minds and our *scientific minds*.

That ancient people may not have understood a lot of things about reality is only understandable but that they were so out of touch with reality that they had never been able to make the connection between the movement of the sun in the sky and the time when they went to bed and got up in the morning I find impossible to imagine just as I find it impossible to imagine that ancient people did not realize that it is not possible to ride on a donkey and its nursing colt at the same time when they were much more familiar with riding than modern readers are. An important clue about what the author of Genesis is talking about can be inferred from the phrase “there was evening and there was morning, the first day” (Gen 1:5). It is obvious that the author is counting something, but what is he counting? Modern readers immediately would rush with the obvious answer that the author is counting the days of the week. An ancient reader, however, would have noticed that this counting cannot refer to the days of the week for a very simple reason: the days of the week did not start and end in the morning. Although end of days in ancient times did not happen in the middle of the night as it is today, they did not end in the morning either but rather in the evening. Using common sense, ancient readers understood that what Genesis describes here is a day of activity which always starts in the morning and ends in the evening followed by a period of rest when energies are restored so that humans are ready for another day of work in the morning. While days and nights are natural events, evenings and mornings are human events so that days are periods when the sun is in the sky and nights when the sun is absent from the sky, while evenings are moments when people go to bed and mornings are moments when people get up in order to go to work. In other words, a day of activity of the sun and a day of work are not necessarily the same thing even if they

happen at the same time and they are both called *days*. Although in modern times human activity is counted in hours, in ancient times human activity was counted in days and the payment for human work was not done on a monthly or a weekly basis, but rather on a daily basis, that is, at the end of the day which was in the evening. Even in modern English one can hear statements like “let’s call it *a day*” when people are doing something and decide to put an end to their work for that day. What we mean by “call it a day” is not that “let’s call today over even if it’s only 5 o’clock in the afternoon so that from this moment we no longer call today Tuesday but think that it is already Wednesday.” What we mean when we call what we are doing “a day” is that we consider that we have done enough work for that day and want to put an end to our work and spend the rest of the day doing something else without implying that the day of the week has already changed. This pattern has remained the same even in modern times because a day of work regularly starts in the morning and ends sometime in late afternoon. Although mornings and evenings are controlled by the rising and setting of the sun, the writer is not referring to a day in terms of the activity of the sun, but rather to a day in terms of the activity of a craftsman. Therefore, this first day has nothing to do with the sun but simply states God’s first activity as a craftsman, and that was to create light. And here again modern readers would cry “idiot!” laughing about this ancient writer who was not able to understand that light and the sun are one and the same thing. And the reason ancient people did not understand that light and the sun were one and the same thing was because they had enough common sense to realize that light came from many other sources rather than the sun. Although when working in the fields light came mostly from the sun, natural light was rarely available in homes and shops where most human crafts were practiced. Since glass and other transparent materials were not available, houses were virtually without windows, and if they did have windows, they were just small openings which could be blocked most of the time not only to preserve the heat, but primarily for security reasons. Although modern buildings have large windows, the light from the sun is virtually absent in most homes and work places so that the light used is almost exclusively from an artificial source. To equate light with the sun ancient people would have found laughable particularly if they had discovered the wide variety of light sources available today. Ancient people knew that when they went to bed they put out a light source such as a candle which did not mean that they turned off the sun as apparently modern people think. Therefore, ancient people understood that when God created the light, he actually created a source of artificial light in order to create the environment in which human activity was possible. Of course, the author does not tell us what kind of light God created, but cannot assume that God used a *natural* source of light such as the sun because that would imply that there was *nature* before there was any *nature*. The sun belongs to a natural world which is already organized and the author is careful not to assume the existence of a sun with its regular and regulating movements when he specifically says

that the condition of the world before any creative activity of God was that of complete chaos. Yes, evenings and morning for the natural world are regulated by the sun, but evenings and mornings as moments that mark human activity are not necessarily regulated by the sun. Even today, people decide when to get up in order to go to work and when to go to bed not by looking at the sun, but rather by looking at a clock.

Another interesting detail about how God created was that he did everything by speaking. This creation through words is understood today as some kind of magic like *abracadabra* – or *avracadavra* according to another spelling. Probably most people know about this word from the series of novels Harry Potter where Avada Kedavra is the magic word used by witches to kill an enemy. The author of the novels probably made a wild guess at the etymology of the word and assumed that “kedavra” came from “cadaver” and adopted it to designate the curse that would turn someone into a cadaver. Those who know Hebrew, however, realize that the word “abracadabra” is a play on two words made up of similar sounds used in the first chapter of Genesis with reference to how God created: בָּרָא (*bārā*), “to create,” and דָּבַר (*dāvar*), “to speak.” Therefore, “abracadabra” means “I will create as I speak” or “Let me create as I speak,” and has nothing to do with killing but with quite the opposite; creating. *Abracadabra* is clearly a reference to the way God is supposed to have created in the first chapter of Genesis and is based on the popular understanding that the creation by words in Genesis is a kind of magic which God used. Words or language in the Bible, however, do not necessarily mean magic. If God had wanted to use magic, he would not have needed to use words; a snap of the fingers would have done the trick just as magicians use the flick of a wand. The use of words by a God who was believed to be alone and therefore there was no one to talk to indicates a thinking process because words or language disclose what someone is thinking. For ancient people, language was the observed and observable activity of the mind. Language is a reflection of a mind and is the only way in which a mind can be understood and evaluated, taking into account that we cannot have direct access to any mind except our own. Therefore, the words in Genesis do not indicate that whatever is created is caused by words, but by an intelligent mind which designs and evaluates what takes place. Words are used in Genesis not in order to tell us that God is a master magician, but in order to tell us that whatever he is doing, is the result of an intelligent plan, and although there are no other human beings to listen to God’s speaking, as a result of his speaking, what he thinks and does can be understood by any intelligent human being even if none exists at this point. Since words are meant to reveal someone’s mind and God is alone, then who is supposed to understand what God is saying? The obvious answer is: whoever reads the story. This leads to the similarly obvious conclusion that the purpose of the creation story is not to help someone understand the world, but to help intelligent beings like humans understand God.

Although ancient people may not have known that words and sounds are just vibrations of the air, they must have known that in order to manufacture something, humans needed some tools because just words did not produce anything. As it was already mentioned, for God to use words when creating is even stranger as those who read these stories believed that God was unique so that there was no one with whom God could talk particularly at a time when no other beings had been created. Therefore, to use words as substitutes for activities must have been done for a reason. An intelligent reader would have realized that words, in order to have meaning, they needed to be placed in a specific order. Moreover, words convey the ideas of the one who speaks and therefore words are the public side of the mind to which there is no direct access. Therefore, words not only convey the idea of order and relationship in order to have meaning, but also the order and the relationship of the ideas of the mind from which those words originate. Further still, the order of the ideas implies a string of activities that turn those ideas into reality, and related ideas imply activities that are related. Language acts like a rear-view mirror: we see the words, but in order to understand the meaning, the words must be placed in a proper relationship, and for the words to be placed in a proper relationship they must be reflections of ideas placed in proper relationships in a mind so that the proof that the ideas are in a proper relationship in the mind is ultimately seen through the actions that turn those ideas in a reality in which there are clear relationships. In this cognitive chain, the mind is always private so that only the words and actions are public, therefore we only have access to the language and the actions of someone, but never to the mind itself. Because only the words and the actions are public, the cognitive chain must close and be tested at this level, and this is precisely the pattern which Genesis uses when describing each activity of God in order to help readers *see* the *image* of God: after each act of speaking, God checks whether what was produced matched perfectly what had been said and that was absolute proof that the mind which was at the origin of both the speaking and the actions was consistent. If a mind is inconsistent, then that can be determined only from the words which are spoken, and if a mind is consistent, this can also be seen in the language. Since God's words and speaking was not addressed to any listener, and since God must be understood through actions, using words to denote actions can only mean that the actions themselves must be seen as words, that is, as having a meaning through relationships with one another and revealing an overall plan in the mind.

This idea of order is further emphasized by the counting of the days, which is not meant to indicate the days of the week but rather the order of the activities in the sense that they are related and their order cannot be mixed up without destroying the whole plan. And indeed, all the actions described are related so that each one sets the stage for the following. The next two actions create the environment necessary for life. The earth is assumed to be a mixture of the three kinds of matter: gasses, fluids, and solids. This

mixture is described in the following words: "The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2). This formless mixture is described as "void" although it cannot be just empty space. Since this mixture had depth, it could not be just void space as long as there was a face on the down side where there was darkness because the light could not penetrate through the mass that filled this space. Moreover, this "deep" did not have a bottom but was sitting on some empty space since the down side was a "face." If on the down surface of the deep was darkness, on the surface face of the deep there was a mixture of water and air, a mixture stirred up continuously by a wind activated by God since God was the only agent that could cause any activity. Therefore, this mixture was not just a motionless mass but a mixture caught up in a continuous chaotic movement suggested by the chaotic movement of the most chaotic natural element; the wind. If this description is intended to help the reader get some clear idea then it succeeds beautifully because the only idea one can get is to end up with a completely blank mind that finds it impossible to imagine anything about what is being described. Chaos that can be described and understood is no longer chaos and language that describes chaos and makes sense is no longer description of chaos but rather of something else. Since the creation is intended to show how order was the result of God's activity and that order was suggested through a description that is clearly organized and structured, so also the complete chaos or lack of order before the creation is also conveyed through a description that would make no sense by setting the mind spinning and not getting anywhere just like the chaotic movement of a wind.

If it is impossible to imagine what was the condition of the earth before creation, the acts of creation are in such a clear relationship that even the dullest mind cannot miss the plan and the progression. On the second day of activity God separated gasses that made up the atmosphere from the mixture so that the mixture was made up now only from fluids and solids. On the third day God separated the fluids from solids so that water formed the seas while the solids made up the dry land. That this separation was done for a purpose is made clear by the fact that God created the vegetation. We already see a pattern: Each action sets the stage for the next one. On the fourth day we are told that God created the sun, the moon, and the stars. And at this point modern readers would begin to laugh about the stupidity of this author who placed the creation of the sun after the creation of vegetation without realizing that vegetation needed light in order to survive. That modern people know more about vegetation when very few of them cultivate the land and ancient people had no idea how vegetation grew when almost all of them spent most of their time cultivating the land I find it hard to imagine. Ancient people knew that plants do not need light during the night so that, if God created the sun on the next day, they would have thought that that was just plain common sense because the first time when the newly created vegetation needed light

was on the next day; exactly when the sun was created. And the text makes perfectly clear that one of the reasons the sun was created was precisely in order to provide light for the vegetation. But the function of the sun and the moon is not limited to just providing light, but to regulate the seasons as well. Ancient people knew that the seasons were regulated by the sun and they used the movement of the moon to keep track of time while stars do not play any role in regulating life on earth therefore stars are just mentioned without being assigned any role. The need for seasons, however, must be seen as being related to vegetation because the life of vegetation is clearly regulated by the seasons more than any other form of life. And this observation helps understand why the biblical writer could not have placed the creation of the sun and the moon earlier than the fourth day: because in a world devoid of any vegetation or form of life there was nothing to regulate and therefore there would have been no need of a sun or a moon.

Once the dry land is covered with vegetation, the other two realms – the atmosphere and the seas – are populated with living animals. In other words, the creation is progressive. Before the creation of plants and animals, it is their habitat that is created, both terrestrial and aquatic. Similarly, plants are created before animals so that food is available when animals emerge. And on the sixth day, God created the animals that populate the dry land. It is at this point, after what we call the natural world was finished, that God said:

“Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Gen 1:26 - 27).

This passage has been understood by both liberals and fundamentalists that God created the human beings on the sixth day with all the other animals that live on dry land. Because the actual creation of the human beings is described in the next chapter, fundamentalists understand the next chapter as extra details on the first chapter added by the author of Genesis as an afterthought either because could not cram so many details in the first chapter or because the writer realized that after finishing the first chapter had left out important details. According to this understanding, what really happened on the sixth day was that God, after created all the land animals, scratched his head, came up with the idea of creating human beings, and instead of just saying “let the earth bring forth human beings,” decided to take time to actually shape one from clay, animated it with his own breath, brought all the animals to the new creature, waited for all the animals to crawl before this man – including snails, turtles, worms, and so on – so that the man could coin a word for each species, discovered that among all these creatures there was no one to match this man somehow, then came up with the

idea to put this man to sleep, took out one of his ribs from his body, shaped a female out of it, woke up the man, presented him with the new creature as his wife, then discovered that this new couple had no place where to live and how to feed themselves, decided to plant a garden with all kinds of trees that would provide food for humans, noticed that the day was almost over and hurried up to take a bath and clean up his hands from mud before sunset in order to observe the Sabbath. This is quite a lot to do in a day, but fundamentalists would argue that what is not possible with humans is quite possible with God.

According to the liberal interpretation, however, the first two chapters of Genesis are not descriptions of the same creation but they are rather two different stories describing two different creations which have nothing to do with one another. The two stories not only do not come from the same author, but not even from the same region and time. The first chapter comes from Babylon and the second story originated somewhere in Palestine. Therefore, the author of Genesis is not necessarily the author of either story but rather a collector who just discovered different manuscripts coming from different areas and from different times, managed to figure out that they both dealt with creation and stitched them together but was too dumb to be able to read them to realize not only that they told completely different stories about the same event, but the supposed creation was not even done by the same deity because the name of the deity in the first chapter is Elohim while the name of the deity in the second chapter is Yahweh. And if it is true that the biblical text was edited many times as almost all scholars agree, why didn't any editor insert chapter two in the sixth day of chapter one if that is where that chapter belongs? While according to fundamentalists the author was quite absentminded scribbling words on scrolls using more afterthought than forethought, according to liberals he was more or less an idiot who was barely able to read, let alone write. If people assume that an author is an idiot, what else are they expected to find in a text but stupidities?

Because ancient readers would have been intelligent enough to realize that such assumptions about the author of a text were simply ridiculous, they would have tried to understand what the author was saying using their knowledge about the language. Instead of using the intellectual gymnastics used by both fundamentalists and liberals to read the text, ancient readers would have just followed common sense which would have told them that the two chapters are just one continuous story. The reason scholars and fundamentalists assume that human beings were created in chapter one is because the creation of humans is planned there. To confuse the creation of something with the planning stage is to confuse a building with its blueprints. That chapter one talks about the planning stage and not about the actual creation of humans is clearly indicated by the language used: "Let us make ... ". Although according to our grammar the subject

of “let us” is plural, ancient readers would have understood that this phrase had nothing to do with the number of subjects speaking, not only because the existence of another god beside their deity would have been a blasphemy, but because this is the language of planning in all languages even today and is used by a single subject regardless whether is speaking alone in an empty room or to a group of people. Therefore, the phrase “let us” does not describe several subjects talking, but rather describes the object of the speaking, that is, the humans, in the sense that they were just a project. In other words, the phrase indicates that humans did not exist at this moment and not that there were several gods talking. A clear indication that at this stage humans were not actually created is the absence of the formulas “and it was so” and “God saw that it was good” that are repeated after each act of creation in this chapter. The language “let us make ... ” has puzzled scholars because they assume that the subject is plural as if God is not alone and discussing with someone else. Later Christians have been quick to see in this language a reference to the Trinity explaining that “us” refers to the three persons of the deity talking. This anachronistic explanation overlooks the fact that the writer and the ancient readers were strongly monotheistic and the idea of God talking with other gods would have been offensive, if not unthinkable. Because ancient readers had no notions of grammar, they did not follow any grammar rules when deciding the meaning of a text but rather followed common sense and understood that this phrase did not describe the *subject* of the verb “to speak,” but rather the *object* of the speaking and under discussion, that is, the human beings. “Let us” does not tell us anything about who is speaking, but is telling us about the object of the speaking, that is, that the object of the speaking is just an idea. Whoever makes a plan would use exactly the same language regardless whether would talk in the presence of others or in an empty room. This change of language marks the two stages of creation: the end of the creation of the natural world and the planning of the creation of the human beings. While creating different parts of the natural world God did it by just speaking without the planning stage to be mentioned, when it comes to the creation of the human beings God started with a plan that is openly articulated.

So, where does the idea come from that God created human beings on the sixth day, immediately after making the plan? This jump to conclusion is based on the next verse which reads: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). In other words, both fundamentalists as well as modern scholars read this verse: “God created humans, both male and female, immediately after finished pronouncing the words “let us make ... “. It is as if, when someone reports about making the plans to build a building and then that the building was built, one would conclude that the building was completed immediately after the blueprints were made. What may have contributed to this strange reading was ignorance and confusion about differences between the Hebrew grammar

and that of modern languages. Although in English and other modern languages a word in past tense like “created” regularly refers to an action past and completed at the time of speaking, that is not always the case with Hebrew. According to English grammar, if God said on the sixth day that he “created” and “blessed” the human beings, both male and female, that necessarily means that at the time when God pronounced those words the human beings had been already created. That ordinary people read the Bible according to the grammar of their native language is excusable; what I do not find excusable is when scholars do the same when they should know better. As even students with elementary knowledge of Hebrew know, verbs in Hebrew have only two forms and no tenses, perfect and imperfect, and the two forms have nothing to do with the time of action but rather with whether the action of the verb is viewed as complete/definite or incomplete/indefinite. Although past actions are by their nature completed and therefore are regularly expressed by the perfect form of the verb while future actions are by their nature incomplete as long as they have not even started and therefore are rendered regularly with the imperfect form of the verb, both perfect and imperfect may refer to actions that have nothing to do with the time when the action is carried out. Consequently, both forms, perfect and imperfect, may describe actions which can be past, present, or future, so that the time of the action is not indicated by the form of the verb but rather needs to be inferred from the context. To confuse the matter further, an imperfect form prefixed by the so called *waw consecutive* describes a perfect action while a perfect form prefixed by the same *waw consecutive* describes an imperfect action. If we look at the word translated “created” in Genesis 1:27 we discover that the actual form is וַיִּבְרָא which is the imperfect form of the verb בָּרָא , “to create,” prefixed by the *waw consecutive* which indicates a perfect action. That the verb בָּרָא , [“created,” perfect], is used to refer to a future action and not to a past action can be proved by how it is used earlier in the very first chapter of Genesis. For instance, the very first words of Genesis read: “In the beginning God created [בָּרָא , perfect] the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). No one to my knowledge has ever understood that the heavens and the earth are already created in the first verse because the Hebrew verb has the perfect form and is translated with the past tense and not that the verb is announcing what God is going to do in what follows. When exactly the same verb occurs again in verse 27, however, both fundamentalist and *critical* scholars interpret it as stating what had already been done and not what God is going to do in what follows after God rests in order to mark the end of the creation of the natural world. It is because the verb indicates a perfect action that it has been translated in modern languages with a past tense, but this is not necessarily true according to the language in which Genesis was written. In Hebrew it is perfectly legitimate to express a present or future action which clearly has not been completed at the time of speaking by using the perfect form of the verb if the action is regarded as decided, certain, and therefore definite. And in case someone is tempted to think that I am making up these

peculiarities of the Hebrew grammar, I will provide some examples. For instance, in the famous covenant which God made with Abraham, God said: “To your descendants I *give* this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen 15:18, NRSV, emphasis mine). The word translated “give,” present tense, is actually נתתי [perfect, “I have given”] which is the perfect form of the verb נתן, and it should be translated with the future tense, “I will give,” taking into account that God is making a promise to Abraham here at a time when he had no descendants yet, promise that was going to be fulfilled hundreds of years later. The use of perfect to refer to something future is justified because God is seeing the decision to give the Promised Land to Abraham’s descendants as something certain and therefore definite in spite of the fact that it was not something accomplished yet. Because this use of perfect to refer to future actions is common in prophetic utterances when God speaks and those utterances are viewed as certain, this use of perfect to refer to future actions has been labeled by grammarians as the *prophetic perfect*. Here is a classic example: “The people who walked in darkness have seen [ראו, perfect, literally “saw”] a great light” (Isa 9:2, NRSV, Isa 9:1 Hebrew). Because of this peculiarity of the Hebrew grammar, when translating Hebrew into a modern language one should look at the context to decide whether the action should be placed in the past, present, or future.

As the context of Genesis 1:27 makes clear, humans were at the planning stage and not a reality. “God created” and “God blessed them” do not refer to the objective existence of humans but rather to God’s decision to create them, decision which was viewed by God as certain and final and therefore used the perfect form of the verb to describe it. That humans were not created at this point is indicated by the fact that after the supposed creation of humans the formulas “God saw that it was good” and “there was evening and there was morning, the *n*th day” are not used. When this formula is used for the last time the text makes clear that it refers to “everything that he [God] had made” and not to humans (Gen 1:31). The reason humans are not evaluated at this stage is because they simply did not exist. When the first human is created, however, in the next chapter, God’s pattern of examining what he had done is resumed only to declare about the man he had created that “is not good” (Gen 2:18). Therefore, instead of having two creations as scholars have ridiculously concluded, the text presents one creation but in two stages: the first stage is the creation of the natural world in six days at the end of which God makes the plan to create humans in his own image. Significantly, after God created the natural world and before the creation of humans God decided to “rest” implying that the only part of the world for which God was directly responsible was the natural world. To “rest” in Hebrew means to “stop doing something,” and since what God was doing so far was to create, to “rest” in this context must mean that God stopped any creative activity so that the creation was finished. Because God examined every act of creation and concluded that each part of the created natural world was very good, there

was nothing else for him to do. The implication of the statement that God “rested” is that the natural world has remained the same since it was first created and the way in which we see it is exactly as it was established in the beginning because God never had to go back and fix the world. Taking into account that after each act of creation God examined it and concluded that it was without any blemish, the natural world has never changed, never will, and there will never be any need for God to intervene and fix it. The summary that concludes the six days of creation refers clearly to the natural world when the text mentions “the heavens and the earth” and does not include humans: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done” (Gen 2:1-2).

God’s resting on the seventh day indicates not only that the natural world is now completed and needs no further interventions from God, but the need for rest must be part of the image of God as a creator, image that humans were expected to emulate. While all other forms of life are regulated by a daily pattern, human life is regulated by a weekly pattern as well, that is, a six-day period of work followed by one day of rest. Although God does not get tired and does not need rest, human creativity requires leisure time when the mind is freed from any activity in order to develop new ideas. Continuous work is always routine work, reproducing endlessly what had been created before. Whatever is new requires time to be conceived and planned as well as time after the work is completed in order to be evaluated and fine-tuned. Bees may be efficient because they never need to interrupt any of their routine activities, but in a bee hive there will never be anything new or unusual unless something goes wrong. When animals do have leisure time because their belly is full and have no need to hunt, they either spend their time slumbering or playing with their piers honing their hunting skills, and not to develop new ideas. It is for this reason that the natural world is viewed as unchangeable because it can only follow the pattern established by God during the first six days of creation.

After God rested, ancient readers would have expected Genesis to continue by describing how the humans which had been planned to emulate God’s imaged were actually created. Ancient readers would have realized that God did not need a whole day for each act of creation and did not need to rest after six days of work and therefore God’s activity is described in terms of human activity at a time when no humans existed. Of course, at the time when they read this story humans existed and they knew how humans worked, when they worked, and when they rested, but they did not know why they were doing this. In other words, they had a very clear image of themselves, but had no idea where that image came from. They realized that the purpose of the story was not to explain to them that there was a sky, that there was dry land, that there

were bodies of water, that birds flew in the air, that fish lived in the water, that vegetation grew on dry land and that the sun and the moon regulated the cycles of nature because such things they could figure out by themselves just by observing the world, but the main purpose of the story was to explain why humans were the way they were and how the world was then and now as a result of what humans have done and is different from the way it was left by God when decided to rest or retire. Readers understood that the author of Genesis set them on a quest of chasing God's image not in the hope of discovering how an invisible God whom no one could see might look like, but rather in order to discover their own image and where it came from. Although humans never need to see an image of God, they do need to see an image of themselves because without an image, they have no idea what to be. A lion does not need an image of a lion in order to know what a lion looks like and what a lion is supposed to do in order to be a lion because lions can be lions even if they have no idea what a lion is. Indeed, they may not even realize that when they see an image of themselves in a pool of water, that is their own image which they cannot recognize because they have no idea what they look like. Some animals may attack their own image in a mirror not realizing that what they see is their own image. The fundamental difference between humans and all other animals is that all animals can be only what they are, and what they are is decided by their genes formed at the time of conception which remain unchanged for the rest of their lives while human life is not something fixed in spite of the fact that humans also inherit traits and instincts from their parents through their genes. To use technical language developed by philosophers, animal *existence* like all objective existence is fixed while human existence is *open*. Objective existence is fixed because animals like all objects can be only what they are and cannot change their own existence while human existence is open because individuals have to shape their own existence or have others do it for them. A lion does not need to plan what to do during a day. If the stomach is full, the lion would keep dozing even if a wildebeest or a gazelle is carelessly grazing just a few yards away, but if the stomach is empty, the lion springs into action without any moment of thought, and after a short chase and the sound of some crushed bones when the stomach gets full again, the lion returns to sleep until the stomach decides that there is time for more action. A lion does not need any *image* to know what to do because what a lion does is decided by its stomach and by some careless animals around. With humans, however, an image of what to do is necessary because there are so many things which anyone can do at the same time that without a clear image, a human would be paralyzed by so many options. Although humans feel hunger just like all the other animals, when they eat and what they eat is not decided by their stomach, and if humans decide to go on a hunger strike and kill themselves with plenty of delicious food around them, their stomach has no influence upon their behavior. It is this fundamental aspect of human nature that the author of Genesis understood and tried to capture when described the human creation using the

following image: “Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). In ancient time clay was the most malleable material that could take virtually any shape and is used to describe human existence because human existence has to be shaped and that shaping has no limit. Yes, the human being is presented as being shaped by God according to his own image because before any human being existed the only image of a creator was that of God, but in a sense, every human being becomes a human being not just by emerging from the mother’s womb, but by being shaped according to some image. The difference is that while the first human being was shaped exclusively by God according to the only image available at that time, the shaping of existing human beings today is done according to a variety of images that are available now and by a multitude of agents which are involved, including the individuals that are shaped themselves.

At this point a scholar or reader with theological education would begin to smile derisively pointing out that I am not aware that I am now in a different chapter and I am reading a different story in which the name of the deity has changed from Elohim to Yahweh. This is standard teaching in all theological schools and is known as the Documentary Hypothesis which was developed by Julius Wellhausen, one of the most prominent founders of what is called *biblical criticism*. According to this theory, the Bible is not an original work of some author or authors but is a collection of documents coming from different times and sources and stitched together without much thought. Of course, even in modern times people can borrow materials from other sources and claim to be their own, but when they do so are careful to integrate them smoothly so that the only way to prove such plagiarism is to find the original document(s) and show passages where word-for-word matches occur. What distinguishes modern plagiarists from the biblical plagiarists is that those who put together the Bible were completely dumb so that they did not pay the slightest attention to whether the texts that they created with borrowed materials had any continuity or made a smooth reading at all. There are mountains of literature known as *historical critical scholarship* claiming to discover *gaps* in the biblical text because material was borrowed from several sources sometimes in passages as small as a single verse, but the most blatant example that proves the magnitude of the stupidity of the biblical writers without parallel in history is the first two chapters of Genesis. As it was already mentioned, it is claimed that the two chapters are two different documents because they describe two creations that have no relationship with one another to the point that even the name of the deity is different which is absolute proof that the two chapters were written by different authors who not only imagined the creation differently, but even worshipped different deities.

It is again this supposed monumental stupidity of the one who wrote Genesis and the universal stupidity of its readers over thousands of years that makes me suspicious that this supposed *critical thinking* might be a kind of thinking that actually defies common sense or even common knowledge about the Bible. For instance, even educated lay people know that the biblical text was not originally divided into chapters but rather that the chapters were introduced much later to create divisions in a text that actually ran continuously without any spaces – even between words – over the whole scroll, sometimes over several scrolls. So, the first two chapters of Genesis may look like two separate stories because modern books regularly have chapters that in our minds are independent units, but is not the way the biblical text was originally conceived and read. That some chapter divisions were placed at points where there are obvious transitions in the text no one can question, but the transition between the first and the second chapter of Genesis is one of the most blatant examples of stupidity on the part of the one who decided where a chapter ends and the next one begins. According to Wellhausen and the *critical scholarship*, the following passage starts a completely different account of creation that comes from a different author, time, and culture than what is described in what precedes this passage:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation (Gen 2:1-3).

According to *critical thinking*, a creation which is clearly described as taking place over one week, the author of the document carefully explains what God does each day for the first six days of the week, but somehow ends the story without telling what God did on the last day of the week at a time when a week had seven days and everyone knew that. But what is even stranger, in the next chapter, according to *critical scholarship*, there is another story written by someone from a different era and thousands of miles away who wrote another story of creation that begins by telling what God did on the seventh day of the week and says nothing about what God had done on any of the previous six days. Since God rested on the seventh day, it follows that there must have been at least six days before the seventh because no one can arrive at a 7th-something without counting six of the same thing before. And what about the name of the deity? According to the translation strategy adopted by New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and which is quoted in these studies, the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, is consistently translated as “God,” while the Hebrew word *Yahweh* is consistently translated and spelled with capitals “LORD.” As anyone can see even without any knowledge of Hebrew, the word used for the deity in the beginning of chapter two, that is, Genesis 2:1-3, is exactly the same as the one used throughout the first chapter: God.

A change does occur beginning not with the second chapter, but with the fourth verse of the second chapter:

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up-for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground-then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being (Gen 2:4-7).

So, where in chapter two is the name of deity *Elohim*/God replaced by *Yahweh*/LORD? Even an idiot who has no idea of Hebrew can see that the word *Elohim*/God has not disappeared and replaced by the word *Yahweh*/LORD. Consequently, the one who wrote chapter two not only knows that the one who wrote the first chapter called the deity *Elohim*/God and continues to call the deity by the same name, but also that the same deity, who is now about to create human beings, has already created the "heavens and the earth," that is, the natural world. The reason the author makes this apparently unnecessary repetition when words were at a premium is because he *expands* the name of the deity on the one hand, and on the other, to refer the reader back to the first chapter when the natural world was created and when the planning of the human beings had been mentioned. In other words, the writer is careful to refer back to chapter one so that the readers realize that the expansion of the name of the deity is not meant to be a break in the story. Therefore, the name of the deity is not replaced by the name of a different deity as it has become a dogma in theological schools, but the name of the deity is prefixed by another name used for the same deity throughout the Bible. And here I can imagine that scholars and educated laity would smile derisively that an expansion of a name is actually a change of the name and a different name means a different deity so that the deity in at least part of chapter two is different from the one in the first chapter. Besides the inability to read an ancient text, what historical-critical scholars prove is a very embarrassing assumption of their own which has nothing to do with any critical thinking but rather with defying common sense, that is, that a different name necessarily presupposes a different person. This is not true even in modern societies as people adopt different names or are given different names all the time. In order to realize how hilarious this idea is, let us suppose that an aboriginal tribe from Amazon would discover in the forest where they live a mass of documents in English in a crushed aircraft which they eventually manage to read after learning English from one of their tribe members who had been a guide to a white explorer who taught him English in order to learn from him about the life of the tribe but refused to give him any information about the culture he came from "for his own good," as he put it. The aboriginal guide imagined that the white foreigner wanted to know so much about the

life of the tribe because he was fascinated by the superior culture of the tribe and refused to provide any information about life back home because he was too embarrassed by the primitiveness of the culture in which the white tribes lived. Seeing their opportunity to learn more about those savage white tribes, they started to study the documents found in the wrecked aircraft and among them discover some stories written by a certain Mark Twain which were very similar to their adventures on their rivers in their forests and which they could understand and enjoy. Then they found other writings by the same Mark Twain that some of these documents – for which they adopted the technical term “sources” – labeled as “humorous” and whose meaning seemed to be quite plain but somehow the white people who read them understood something that made them lough, although the aboriginals could not quite figure out what was so funny about what was said. In order not to get confused, they decided to label the documents which were telling stories which they enjoyed with the letter “S” from “stories” and the documents labeled “humorous” in the sources and which they could not quite understand with the letter “H.” Then they found other documents about the same author which claimed that he was a lecturer and visited places which the “sources” referred to as “universities” where he offered discourses or teachings although he himself had never studied in such places, and they labeled those sources with the letter “L” from “lectures.” Then they found yet other documents which referred to the same author by the name Samuel Langhorne Clemens, other documents used the name Samuel Clemens and still others as Sam Clemens. According to some of these sources, he was actually a poet who wrote pieces of poetry like “To Mary in HCCCL” and they found in some documents a piece of poetry entitled “To Miss Katie of HCCCL” which was signed “Rambler” and some of these documents even claimed that “Rambler,” Sam Clemens, Samuel Clemens, Samuel Langhorne Clements, and Mark Twain were still the same person. They labeled these last sources with the letter “P” from poetry. Trying to make sense of all these documents, they came to the conclusion that they could not have been produced by the same person but rather they were produced over a long period of time – hundreds, if not thousands of years – by different authors which the traditions attributed to the same person and eventually lumped together. Then they wanted to date these sources and came to the conclusion that the “S” source was the earliest as white people sat around a fire and told their daily adventures orally and when writing was invented, someone started to write them down. The “P” documents came probably from a later period when this primitive white people developed some literary skills and started to write using pre-established forms. The “L” documents probably came from an even later period when the white tribes evolved and established some institutions in which young people were brought to be educated and some of the teachings which were taught in such schools came to be written down and came to be attributed to the same legendary figure known as Mark Twain in order to confer them authority. At an even later stage, when the tribes became

strictly controlled by an elite and when criticism about the authorities were no longer possible and tolerated, an even more sophisticated kind of writing was developed labeled “humorous” in which at face value looked quite benign but the statements had a coded meaning that only the initiated understood. Because of the cultural gap between the highly civilized Amazon people and the primitive white tribes, the hidden meaning of the humorous statements was hopelessly lost. The beauty of intellectual arrogance is that it enables you to laugh about everyone else while being completely unable to realize how laughable you yourself are.

As even an ignorant can see, the name of the deity is not changed from the first chapter to the next, but is only expanded, but even a complete change of a name does not necessarily mean a different person, and that has been true in all times and cultures, particularly in the Bible. As even lay readers of the Bible know, characters in the Bible often change names: Abram into Abraham, Jacob into Israel, Sara into Sarah, Gideon into Jerubbaal, and so on. Because a name presupposes a relationship, any change in the condition or the relationship of a person is marked by a change of the name. This practice is widespread even in modern societies so that people choose different names and are given different names or additions to their names all the time. When someone is called “president X,” or “Doctor X,” or “Professor X,” or “Reverend X,” or “Bishop X,” or “Colonel X,” and so on, what are these expansions of names but changes in the relationships between those who use such appellatives and those who are referred to? The biblical writer presents the creation of the world as being in two stages or parts. The first part, the natural world, was created by the deity through words which presupposes no direct relationship between the natural world and its creator. Moreover, at the end of the creation of the natural world the deity is described as resting. For the second part of the creation, however, the deity is described as actually shaping the human being with his hands, using his own image as a model, and breathing from his own life into the new being. This radical change in the relationship between the creator and the object of creation had to be marked by the name used for the deity.

Before any human being is created, we are told that there were no fields on earth and rain did not happen because there were no human beings to work the land. The writer is perfectly consistent that the world as is described in the first chapter before the existence of any human beings cannot explain how the world is today as well as at the time when the story was read. We see now fields and different plants that are cultivated and watered by the rain but that is not the picture which we get from the first chapter. Although the activity of God is carefully structured and displaying an overall plan, the world is not. What the natural world was when came out of the mind and the mouth of God and when everything was “very good” was just a jungle. The natural world – which is worshipped by environmentalists – at its best is nothing but a chaotic mixture

of plants and animals trying to feed their bodies so that their body can decay and fertilize the soil so that further bodies can be nurtured. From God's point of view, although the natural world is finished on the seventh day when he rested because he had nothing to do to the natural world any more, the world was not finished because it was still that chaotic mass with which God had started on the first day except now was a mixture not of just gasses, fluids, and solid matter, but also of plants and animals which were no longer stirred by the chaotic movement of a wind, but were caught up in an endless cycle of seasons regulated by the celestial bodies like the sun and the moon. God had brought life in the chaotic matter but God needed beings made after his own image to bring order into the living world, and that was precisely the declared purpose in deciding to create human beings in his own image: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'" (Gen 1:28). The world was full of life all right, but there was no organized life such as fields in which the soil is prepared by tilling and regularly watered by rain so that crops had optimal conditions to grow.

At this point I anticipate that modern readers would cringe at the idiot who wrote Genesis for not realizing that rain was a natural phenomenon so that it formed and fell regardless whether there were any fields on the ground to water and humans who needed the rain and the crops. Whether the ancient people understood the phenomenon of condensation and how the rain formed we do not know but the author of Genesis is amazingly consistent so that, in describing what God does, is careful to place an act of creation in relation with the other acts of creation so that nothing is created before it is necessary. Just as the writer is careful not to place the creation of the sun before the creation of vegetation which needed the sun to develop, and is careful not to place the creation of animals before the creation of vegetation which animals needed for food, so also, he is careful not to place the creation of the rain before the creation of the fields that needed the rain. The mentioning of the fields points to the fact that the creation of humans was also part of a broader picture, and after the first human being is created, the text says:

So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner (Gen 2:19-20).

Naming is used in the Bible to describe power relationships which are part of the reasoned reality. The one who gives a name is in the position of authority and the one who receives a name is in a subordinate position. Because ancient people had a clear understanding of reasoned reality with power relationships as an important part of that

reality, they used naming as a linguistic device to convey those relationships. This is true even in modern societies, but because we are intellectually handicapped so that we can only conceive objective reality, we are no longer aware of how naming functions. Yes, individuals can choose for themselves any name they want, but whatever *names* they choose, are actually pseudonyms (that is, *false* names) or nicknames (that is, *added* or *altered* names). The true name is always given by parents and the society and inscribed in a birth certificate to which all the other names are traced. And changes of names – which are called *titles* – such as Doctor *name*, General *name*, president *name*, Professor *name*, are all conferred by proper authorities, and anyone who chooses such names without receiving them from proper authorities commits a crime. The names are important to exercise authority because the subordinates are supposed to carry out the directions given to them, and names enable the authorities to assign roles and the subordinates to understand what is expected of each one of them. Because the one who is in the position of authority is not expected to receive orders from subordinates, subordinates are not supposed to use names when addressing an authority. When they do need to address an authority, they must use an expansion of the name by prefixing the name by “Sir,” “Madam,” “Mr.,” “Miss,” “Your Excellency,” “Your Majesty,” “Mr. President,” “Reverend,” “Rabi,” and so on, in order to indicate their subordinate status. Because humans had been created to exercise their authority to place the chaotic life of plants and animals in proper relationships just as the natural world had been placed in proper relationship by God, after the creation of the human beings God brought all the animals to the man to exercise his authority by giving names. And just as after each act of creation in the first chapter God examines what had been done to see whether is good or not, he examines the first human being and although the man is able to give names to all the living creatures and exercise his authority as had been planned on the sixth day, God discovers for the first time that what he created was not quite right and begins to scratch his head. The irony here is that an *omniscient* God – that is, a God who knows *everything* – did not know that a man needed a woman although in the first chapter when he had planned to create human beings according to his own image knew that a man needed a woman in order to populate the whole planet and therefore had planned to create and bless the woman as well. If God already knew that the man needed a woman, why did he run this experiment with parading all the animals before the man to find out that he needed a wife? I know, I know, the one who wrote Genesis and all those who read it over thousands of years were complete idiots, but I hope this writer has provided enough evidence that he is way too smart to be such an idiot. Since he and his readers knew that God did not run this experiment in order to learn that a man needed a woman, common sense would have enabled them to realize that God is running an experiment not in order to *learn* something that he did not know, but in order to *teach* humans something that he already knows but humans did not – or at least pretended to be ignorant of. In other words, in the Bible God runs experiments not in

order to learn something that he does not know, but in order to teach humans lessons and we will see more such examples as our studies progress. The reason God decides to run an experiment so that the newly created man understands that he needs a wife is because God – and the author of Genesis – does not assume that the new human being is capable of sophisticated thinking. Running an experiment in order to learn or discover by observation something you do not know or understand is the lowest form of learning of which even animals are capable from the earliest stages in life. If a child does not know that touching a live coal with the hand causes injuries and great pain, can run an experiment and observe what happens. This form of leaning is so widespread that modern academia has labeled it *scientific thinking* and elevated it to the highest level of inquiry claiming that it developed only in modern times when western civilization developed a philosophy that set up experiments as the basis of epistemology, that is, of true and error-free knowledge. It is because experiments can be run only on objective reality, Western academia has reduced reality to objective reality so that *scientific thinking* can only be done by scientists who can understand only objective reality through experiments and observation. It may come as a shock to Western people to learn that experiments and the so called *scientific thinking* is not the privilege of some of the smartest people who are called *scientists*, but is a kind of knowledge which is available to all kinds of beings, including all animals. The reason animals can only practice what has been labeled *scientific thinking* is because the only reality which animals can understand is objective reality and the only way they can learn is through experiments and accurate observation of the results. For instance, if a hyena does not know what might happen when messes up with a lion who is devouring a pray and wants a snack for itself from the pray, can run an experiment either by attacking the lion or watch carefully and objectively what happens when another hyena attacks a lion. If the hyena manages to survive the experiment will no doubt have learned a lesson that not only will not forget for the rest of its life, but would be careful to pass it over to its offspring so that they do not need to learn something the hard way. If there is a difference between how animals and scientists observe reality, the difference is that animals approach objective reality and carry out observation truly objectively with a blank mind free of any preconceived beliefs, biases, hidden agendas, and so on. If animals had to find out using *scientific thinking* that burning a lot of fuel would lead to an increased level of the seas and of the oceans by several meters, they could come to such a conclusion only after watching the fires and seeing the increase of the water level, but apparently scientists already know the results of their experiments long before they even do any observation.

At the end of the experiment God discovered that among the animals there was no compatible partner for the man and came up with the following solution:

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh (Gen 2:21-24).

At this point I expect feminists to explode with indignation that this text has nothing to do with what any deity may have done or said but is rather a weapon which men developed in order to assert their supremacy over women. In other words, this text is not about how the world originated, but how the male dominance over women was instituted and presented as having been established by God so that no woman would dare to question it. The reason the male author places the creation of the man before that of the woman is in order to establish the privileged status of the man over the woman. When bad things happen, however, as when humans eat from the tree of knowledge, the same misogynist writer is careful to present the woman first so that females get the blame for whatever is bad while men get the credit for everything that is good. Another detail that places the woman in a subordinated position is the fact that she is created from a body part taken from the man as if she is a derivative product. And finally, the body part used in order to create the woman is a rib and its lack of prominence indicates the lack of importance of the women in male mentality.

That the Bible has been read with the mentality that the feminists denounce no one can deny but if we really want to understand what the Bible says we need to pay careful attention to the words used. It is true that men have read this story over time to claim that their power over women was instituted by God and we saw that pattern when we analyzed activities such as *cooking* in order to understand the concept of reasoned reality. Although men often understood this story to say that women were created to be their slaves, the word used by Genesis is not "slave" or "servant" (עֶבֶד), but "help" or "helper" (עֵזֶר). Contrary to both fundamentalist and feminist readings, the first man is not described in this passage as a *privileged* boss but rather as a *helpless* child who needed *help*. Slaves always provided *service* to their masters and never *help* and nothing would have been more offensive to their masters than to suggest that slaves were *helping* their masters or that their masters needed *help* from the slaves. The concept of *service* or *slavery* always places the one who offers the service in a subordinate and dependent position, but the concept of providing *help* places always the one who receives help in a position of subordination and of dependence. As far as the reason God chose to make the woman out of a rib and not some other body part, a story is told – usually by feminists – that after God created Adam, offered to make for him a woman who would carry out any orders he would give her, who would fulfill all his desires, who would never complain or ask for anything, who would work hard so that he

would have everything he wanted, and whom he could abuse in any way he wanted. Then Adam asked: “and how much would such a woman cost?” God replied: “an arm and a leg.” Then the man asked: “and what do I get for a rib?” Feminists may think that if the writer of Genesis wanted to create a text for which feminists and modern people would have the slightest regard he should have chosen to write that God took the head of the man and out of it created a woman and in this way the importance of the woman-and of women in general – would have been properly expressed. The one who wrote Genesis obviously used common sense when choosing which part of the body God used in order to create the woman. Of course, the writer could not have chosen a visible and prominent body part such as the head, an eye, an arm, or a leg, because then anyone would have noticed that men do not lack any of these body parts and the story would have looked like a fabrication. In ancient times dissection on human bodies was strictly forbidden so that by choosing a non-visible body part such as a rib so that no one could check whether men really lacked any ribs or not seemed to be a common-sense choice. But the most important reason may have been that humans do not seem to make any use of their ribs so that depriving a man of a rib did not seem to incapacitate him in any way. We need to keep in mind that the woman was meant to be of some *help* for the man and not the source for a disability. This was important because the man is already described as helpless and by providing him with a *helper*, the writer is careful not to disable the man any further by depriving him of some important body part. Had ancient people known about the appendices, probably would have chosen it as the body part from which to create the woman, because the idea that the story tries to convey is not that the importance of the woman depends on the importance of the body part from which she is created, but rather that there is a body relationship between the spouses that bonds them together. And that is exactly the idea which the man recognizes that the wife is part of his own body. The idea of the feminists that this text authorizes men to abuse their wives would have seemed to ancient readers and to the author of Genesis as ridiculous as someone who is abusing and trying to get rid of part of his own body. And that explains why the man was created first and not the woman. Of course, God could have created the woman first and then come to the conclusion that women by themselves are helpless and then would have made a helper out of her rib and teach her the lesson that she needs a man and should not abuse him, but God is presented as choosing to create the man first in order to teach the man the lesson of mutual dependence because men needed to learn that lesson more than women do. The author of Genesis knew that men had already developed into master killers and violent abusers and the creation of the human beings is presented so that the absurdity of such male behaviors is denounced. Although the man had been put to sleep during the operation that resulted in the creation of the woman, he knows what had happened which indicates that *sleep* here does not mean lack of consciousness. In biblical language, *sleep* is a euphemism for death so that the story suggests that the creation of

the woman implied the death of the man. The birth of the life as a couple implies the death of the life as solitary individuals by leaving behind their parents. Of course, the first couple is not described as growing up as individuals and they did not need to leave behind any parents, but what the first man declares is a rule that applies to all their descendants. The way in which the first family is created is clearly intended to set a pattern for the whole human family. Unlike pairing in the natural world which is controlled by instincts and therefore belongs to the objective reality, human marriage is a deliberate choice and therefore belongs to the reasoned reality. Of course, there could be many reasons for which people decide to marry, but the author of Genesis presents the strongest possible reason when described the marriage of the first couple: both partners recognized that there is a physical bond between the two. For one partner to renounce or to get rid of the other would be as unthinkable as for individuals to reject parts of their own body.

The fact that Adam needed the *help* of a wife implies that humans were intended to have a special role in the world, role that goes beyond multiplication and reproduction since that is something than all plants and animals can do, so that humans would emulate what God had done during those six days of creation, something that no other form of life can do. Although at this point we are not told what *help* Eve would provide for Adam, since Genesis is a continuous story, we should expect to read next about something that Eve does and Adam is the recipient. And that is precisely what the next chapter is all about.

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