Jesus on being '*Human'* without *Humanism's* Metaphysical Closures

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Abstract:

Metaphysics, as defined in this paper, is the general attempt to encase 'reality' in a system of concepts that purports to provide intellectual and moral *closure.* Semantically, this sense of closure is expressed by the addition of the suffix '-ism' to a term—as in Platonism, Idealism, Realism, *et al.* When this effort to exhaustively enclose the concept "*Human*" is extended to the realm of Religion—to God and Creation—the problematic result is the production of exclusionary and conflicting systems such as Monotheism, Polytheism, and Pantheism; but it also extends to such reactionary systems as Atheism, Agnosticism, and Secular Humanism. The term *Humanism* has been formed to indicate that a systemic intellectual and moral closure, one that can be used for the governance of all of mankind, is also available as a way of bypassing the mysteries of religiously-induced belief or 'Faith'. While the Judaic Testament is embedded in the meta-language of dualistic absolutisms, some Fundamentalist Christians have applied the same meta-language to the gospel of Jesus. It is understandable, then, that Geza Vermes, in his *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (2009), complains that "cult groups and sects" have contaminated the gospel of Jesus. But is there some way to *philosophically* enter Jesus' concept of what it means to be *Human* without becoming entangled in the divisive metaphysical closures of *Secular* or *Religious Humanisms*? And is the use of **Parables** by Jesus his key to the avoidance of the dualisms embedded in the Judaic **Proverbs** and **Psalms**? Looking retrospectively, the effort of Jesus to cleanse the concept of being *Human* from its philosophic/metaphysical clutter appears to lie before us in the Analytic Philosophy of several 20th century philosophers. With Donald Davidson in mind, the use of **Parables** is a form of transactional communication that is governed by the *'Principle of Charity'*, a linguistic instrument driven by the Oral Tradition, but one missing in the Judaic **Proverbs** and **Psalms.** Jesus' Parables were paradigm examples of Davidson's integrative **Principle of Charity** and his related concept of "rational translatability"; that is, his Parables *avoided* the "suppression of what [one often] regarded as [someone's] aberrant or 'irrational' beliefs." Davidson identified his "Principle of Charity" as a "principle of rational accommodation": "We make maximum sense of the words and thoughts of others when we interpret in a way that optimizes agreement" (Davidson, Chap. 13). For the Gospel of Jesus, this expresses the essence of what a Parable achieves: it transforms '*human*' communication into something '*humane'*—or, as Daniel Dennet characterized Davidson's version, this "*principle of humanity*" involves the presupposition that we can attribute to another person "the propositional attitudes one supposes one would have oneself in those circumstances" (Dennett, p. 343, italics added). Or, in other words, "Do unto others.....etc." In effect, without resorting to metaphysics, all of Jesus' moral proclivities were governed by this supreme "Principle of Charity." Jesus attempted to break through the human resistance to humane communication: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear"
(Matthew 13:10-17).

Introduction:

Speaking descriptively, when reading the Old Testament, the only geometric figure that significantly depicts man's relationship to God is the *straight line*; however, the *parabola* would seem to be the best model for depicting the Fall of Man in *Genesis,* and the configuration implicit in Jesus' attempt to salvage fallen mankind. In designing a metaphysical system that strives for theistic moral closure, the "straight and narrow" line was the traditional juristic pathway to the Kingdom of God. It must have been a conscious choice when Jesus turned to the *parabolic curve*, the circular pasture in which he could serve as Shepherd of all of mankind, the lost sheep brought

home while draped around the Shepherd's neck; the *Parable* was his vehicle for communication. He did not choose to express his views in the *sic et non* form of Judaic Proverbs, and certainly not in the judgmental and vengeance-driven Psalms.

The parabolic form can be seen as the underlying design of much of what Jesus does. It might even be possible to claim that a 'miracle' is a parabolic approach to turning Nature away from the implicit laws of causation. Certainly the concept of a *'resurrection'* eliminates the most feared aspect of life, and that is life's ultimate closure—"the end of the line," as it is often expressed. Hence, of all his Parables, perhaps the Parable of the redemption of the lost lamb was the key to his intentions. But as the Judaic 'linear' tradition found its way back into the world of Fundamentalist Christianity, the result was the Puritan distortion of the gospel of Jesus. In *Genesis* and in Salem, Massachusetts, the 'woman' was portrayed as the one who deviated from the 'straight and narrow' pathway. And it was in the activity of 'woman' that 'witchcraft' became feminized, while in the 12th century, the Spanish-born Jewish theologian, Moses Maimonides, attempted to finally explain the sin inherent in the 'bowed' woman made famous in Medieval Christian art. In the 1860's, Lincoln's struggle to hold together a nation metaphysically divided against itself—divided into secular and religious factions—required a geometric feat that came to be seen as "The Gettysburg Gospel."

Following Geza Vermes' (2009) notion that the "Authentic Gospel of Jesus" has been overlooked by most of us, we might also note Vermes' claim that Jesus simply avoided metaphysical systematization and closure. "There was nothing systematic in [Jesus'] message," Vermes argues. "He was not a professional theologian who subjected the secret life of God to close scrutiny. He was an existentialist preacher who endeavored to persuade his disciples to change their lives and to collaborate with him in the great enterprise of preparing the way towards the Kingdom of God" (Vermes, p. 406). Jesus was not a writer of Psalms and Proverbs. Immersed in the great Oral Tradition of the commoners with whom he lived, his stories or Parables provided the highest level of abstraction he attained. The Oral Tradition was committed to a mimetic or imagistic thought process, an instrument that served him well, though he did open the gateway to reflexive thinking. His most convincing image was *not* the Judaic **linear scale** which provided a static, juristic measuring device; It was not Jesus who uttered Proverb 11 (1): "A false balance is abomination to the lord but a just weight is his delight." Nor did this man, who asked us to befriend our enemies, recite Proverb 11 (21): "Though hand join hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered." For Jesus, it was not the iron spirit-level of the law that reigned, but the ever-inclusive parabolic **love,** the *pasture* and the attentive *Shepherd* who protected the lost lambs—the poor, the harlots, the pariahs and ostracized. In his attempt to convey what it meant to be **human,** he moved to the commonplace, adjectival process of being **humane** and **loving**. And without resorting to metaphysical definitions, his intention was to convey the sense that being human was a process of *individuating others [not normalizing them] through a care-giving, loving attention.* The grand irony has been that, in its metaphysical drive toward a new, god-riven 'humanistic' paradise, the hidden *absolutism* of Secular Humanism has ended up expelling a majority of humans. Biology and hypostatized biological norms, norms like '*reason',* replaced the entire realm of *affective spirituality.* Thus, paraphrasing the Scottish philosopher Gert Biesta (2010, p. 794), Jesus felt that "**humanism has to be denounced. . .because it is not sufficiently human."** The two-sided, commonplace sense of being 'human', the sense embedded in the term *humane,* is the dual capacity to nurture, care for, forgive, and show loving kindness to others, while, on the other hand, to recognize one's own inherent *vulnerability*, *weakness, imperfection,* and *fragility.* It is the capacity for loving in spite of one's own inherent fragility and vulnerability. [I am indebted to Pastor Thomas Smith of the Federated Church in Westport, New York, for his discussion of the use of circles in prayer.]

The Problematic Character of 'Fundamentalist Humanism':
    Speaking as an Educator, Biesta argues:

> The fundamental problem with humanism, is that it *posits a norm of*
> *'humanness,'* a norm of what it means to be human, and in doing so excludes all
> those who do not live up to or are unable to live up to this norm. …Humanism
> thus seems unable to be open to the possibility that newcomers might
> radically alter our understanding of what it means to be human. …It can only
> think of each newcomer as an instance of a human essence that has already
> been specified and is already known in advance (*ibid*., pp. 794f, italics added).

In this sense, Humanism remains saddled with the Biblical 'Fall of Man' and simply fails to transform this Fall, as John Milton hoped to do in *Paradise Lost,* into a '*Fortunate* Fall', one which produced "good" from "evil". In his celebration of the value of Christianity, Neville notes: "you cannot love enemies if you cannot find the individuals because they have been folded into the Wicked Other of the system" (Neville, p. 104). By definition, Secular Humanists have no instrument for loving their enemies, since their enemies are those who cannot "clear their minds of gods and souls and fairy tales" (cf. the flyer, *FREE INQUIRY,* published by the Council for Secular Humanism).

In his recent discussion of the contemporary significance of Moses Maimonides, "Judaism's Greatest Sage" (1138-1204), J. M. Harris (2014) takes issue with Secular Humanism's attempt to solve the world's problems by bypassing religion. "Centuries after Maimonides," Harris notes,

> Sigmund Freud (and the Enlightenment generally) would come to see the
> abolition of religion as the only way to overcome people's reluctance to face
> the world as it is. Yet in the decades that have elapsed since after the
> publication in 1927 of Freud's *The Future of an Illusion,* religion has shown no
> sign of disappearing—nor has contemporary secular political or moral
> discourse particularly distinguished itself when it comes to dealing with the
> world in all its complexity. (*Foreign Affairs,* March/April, 2014, p. 160.)

The great Oral Tradition tied to Jesus still lived in the writing of the 14th century Italian poet, Petrarch, who wrote: "It is more important to want to do good than to know the truth" (*On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others*). Linking Religion to the Oral Tradition rather than to textual Metaphysical speculations concerning the whole of Reality seems never to have passed away. This is referenced in Maimonides' religious *modesty,* as Harris notes in his recent reference to Halbertal's work:

> [by] grasping the vast beauty and power of the world we learn to perceive it
> for what it is—a grand manifestation of God's wisdom in which *we humans are*
> *one marginal aspect of its design."* (*Loc. cit*. Italics added.)

And as Plotinus noted: "Without virtue, God is a mere name." (*Enneads*, II, 9.) Open to a continuous **parabolic expansion** of 'doing good', of loving God and mankind, the Oral Tradition was perfectly suited to the religious mission of Jesus; while bypassing the metaphysical play with 'names of God' and speculations about God's nature, Jesus attempted to bring 'virtue' to life. He broke through the pale drawn by all metaphysical humanists—secular, jurisprudential, and religiously sectarian.
    In his admonitions to his disciples concerning the premature universalizing of his views, Jesus must have sensed the danger of institutionalizing the 'Logos' by making it the metaphysical *cornerstone* of the Kingdom of God. From Constantine's time to the 21st century, the disintegration of the Church has been the product of a series of metaphysical civil wars. In his

recent discussion of the Catholic (Universal) Church, Peter Manseau has written in *The New York Times*:

> Ancient grudges that make current schisms look like lovers' spats are now part
> of the structure of the church, in which the Western and Eastern Rites maintain
> distinct traditions as remnants of bygone quarrels. The centuries-long spans
> over which previous rifts have been healed suggests that the fate of today's
> breakaway churches will not be resolved anytime soon. In the meantime, all
> these groups will continue *to claim the same contested word as their own*.
> With hundreds of independent Catholic churches already operating in the
> United States and more on the way, it will most likely become increasingly
> difficult to know exactly what the word [Catholic] is meant to signify.
> (*The New York Times*. 3/10/14, p. A21. Italics added.)

In St. Luke's Gospel [15:3-7], Jesus speaks 'parabolically', thus never shutting out the lost sheep, and says, ""What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." (*The Holy Bible*. King James Version, 1989.)

In this attempt to characterize what it means to ***act as a human,*** Jesus is not embedding his view in some closeted metaphysical system—that is, in a direct line to God. His parabolic attempt to identify what it means to be human has greatly influenced a large variety of reflective activists. Historically, just to selectively mention some of his influences on a variety of modern notables, there is Lincoln at Gettysburg, and there are the Feminist attempts to save women from the fate of those who perished during the Salem Witch Trials. As existential activists, Jesus and Lincoln found that the essence of being 'human' was to *humanely* recognize the vulnerability of humans in their effort overcome the struggles of a world in search of freedom and love. The 'Kingdom of God' is the reverence for *creative and progressive **civility** in the lived world—a world still too long on poverty and too short on Love: the 'Fall of Man' was part of a parabolic beginning—an open curve into a new direction and not a fatal, final misfortune.* The search for metaphysical fundamentality had to be abandoned—as Darwin recognized, and as John Dewey's quest for an evolving *Common Faith* supported.

In the context of causation, however, since 'woman' was the Biblical *'cause celebre'* of the 'Fall of Man' into the "tangled web" of secularity, the issue of *misogyny* has always been a compelling part of this discussion. 'Woman' has yet to fully advance into the circle of the Fall made *Fortunate* in the more "authentic gospel of Jesus." While humanity has advanced from Covenants with God to Constitutional Government, the liberationist footprints of 'woman' mark the revolutionary pathways into the 'Fortunate Fall'.

Lincoln's "Gospel": the Quest for a Healing "Principle of Charity":

The *"Kingdom of God,"* projected by Jesus as the new model for *human* life, a pasture in which all of God's lambs would reside in peace, formed the hidden gospel in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Since some 600,000 of Lincoln's Christian lambs were slaughtered in America's 'Civil War', his speech had to stitch the incision created by the metaphysical defense of slavery: Jesus' gospel had to be brought into play in order to restart the parabolic curve of civility. As Gabor Boritt (2006) noted: "If God loomed ever larger in Lincoln's thought as the war went on, if his words at Gettysburg spoke deeply to the devout, they spoke also to more secular people, for in

some part he remained one of them. As for Lincoln, 'dedicate, consecrate'" was a language that placed him in the middle and "reached out to all—as many as he could reach" (*The Gettysburg Gospel*, p. 121). Here was an expanding parabola of civility and an attempt to save as many lambs as possible through the spread of a "principle of charity." Lincoln's only hope was the possibility of a foreshadowing of Davidson's "principle of rational accommodation."

In Lincoln's (November 19th, 1863) "Gettysburg Address", the destructive *Civil War* needed to be resolved by bringing together *freedom* and *love,* without which there could be no enduring civility. Lincoln's speech reflected the dilemma he faced. As Boritt notes: "The secular fatalist [Lincoln] of old began to turn into a religious fatalist" (Boritt, p. 120). Though Jesus is unmentioned in Lincoln's address, an equation can be written in which Lincoln's last words —"that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom"—reflect Jesus' hope that the "Kingdom of God" would soon be realized on earth. In effect, Lincoln hoped that "The secularists could understand [that is, *translate*] his Gettysburg speech largely on their own terms"(*ibid*., p. 121). The only solution, it would seem, to the conflicted closures caused by divisive metaphysical systems, would be the American Constitutional process, and this process was largely an elaboration of Jesus' Parable of the lost lamb and the parabolic encirclement by a *humane* shepherd and his society. The American fight against metaphysical closure did not begin with Lincoln, nor did it end on the night of his assassination. Constitutional Democracy could only be a way-station to the Kingdom of God to the extent that the "Principle of Charity" was recognized and fully enacted.

Civil Strife as Gender Strife:
In Salem, Massachusetts, 171 years prior to Lincoln's oration at Gettysburg, but in defiance of the "authentic gospel of Jesus," the Salem Witch Trials (1692), an ostensible effect of a long historical antagonism between the Greek and Hebrew metaphysical influences on Christian civilization, attempted to destroy the threat of (demonic) divination in a theocratic state. But while the trials soon ended as Cotton Mather sought an educational solution, the murderous conduct of some of its Clerics made Puritan Christianity seem somehow *impure.* In his *Short Studies in Literature* (1891), H. W. Mabie attempted to answer this question:

> The reaction against Puritanism, against the exclusive rule of the
> Hebrew spirit, is still incomplete…it is a reaction from the partial
> to the whole; from the rigid and arrested movement of mind to its
> free, healthful, and complete activity; from the endeavor to live by
> vision of a single side of life to the endeavor to live by vision of a
> complete life. Matthew Arnold has said that Puritanism locked the
> English mind in a dungeon. ("The Greek and Hebrew Tendencies,"
> p. 129.)

Jesus' "authentic gospel" approached the elimination of the divisive 'civil wars' to which the secular world was subject by advising his disciples not to casually spread his words. But it was inevitable that the spread of Christianity would exacerbate such conflicts. In the 15th century, as Carroll points out in *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (2001), 'secular humanism' emerged—the 'secular humanism' that seemed to plague Lincoln at Gettysburg:

> ...in 1453, Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks. …More
> immediately, the fall of the city Constantine had founded marked the
> definitive end of the Christian Eastern Empire and of any hope of
> reconciliation between Roman Catholicism and the Greek Orthodox
> "schismatics." Also, the exodus west of scholars from Constantinople,
> after its fall, would be an important factor in the emergence of
> *secular humanism***,** in Italy, the heart of the church. So there were
> solid reasons for the institutional paranoia that was rampant in the

church now. (Carroll p. 349. Italics added.)

While Lincoln fought to provide a humane end to slavery in America, no civil war was fought to liberate women, and though women played a significant role in the emergence of Christianity, especially in the medieval rise of Maryology, feminism did not play a critical role in church history. The Salem Witch Trials (1692), and the earlier multiple executions of women in Medieval Europe, demonstrated that it would take many centuries for 'woman' to break through the metaphysical barriers of the past. Concerning the theocratic contamination of Christianity that led to gendercide, we might note Vermes' claim: "…what I have reconstructed as the genuine religion of Jesus [which was not misogynistic] is espoused nowadays only by single individuals or is distorted and caricatured by cult groups and sects" (Vermes p. 424). Consistent with Biblical *Genesis*, fundamentalist misogynistic theists saw witchcraft as an attempt to achieve divine power on a secular level. If one compares the Old Testament with the work of both Jesus and St. Thomas Aquinas, one cannot find in the latter statements what is clearly enunciated in Exodus and Leviticus:

Exodus 22:18 "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

Leviticus 20:27 "A man also or a woman that hath a familiar
spirit, or that is a wizard [i.e., a male 'witch'], shall surely be
put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood
shall be upon them." (King James Version)

The Old Testament's inclination toward misogyny, though tempered, is given a theological explanation when Maimonides appears on the scene in the 12th century. Though Maimonides' interest in Aristotle was comparable to the interest that moved St. Thomas Aquinas about half a century later, Aristotle's seemingly misogynistic statement, broadly circulated in the Middle Ages, was not a position that St. Thomas adopted. For St. Thomas misogyny could not be theologically justified. While Robert Nolan (2009) engages in a modest defense of Aristotle (the classical issue is whether 'woman' possesses a rational soul), his defense of St. Thomas is clear and convincing: "There are more than fifty passages…in Aquinas where he does refer to the infusion of the rational soul. In none of these passages does he make any distinction between men and women. All in all, then, those searching for evidence that Christianity has viewed woman as defective to man will have to look elsewhere than to Thomas Aquinas."

Misogyny in the Work of Moses Maimonides. (Scarlett Moore):

In the work of Moses Maimonides, the Judaic-Biblical concerns about 'woman's' involvement with sin, as resistance to God's power, are only partially tempered. Moses Maimonides (born in Cordova, 1135 AD), a Jewish theologian/philosopher who wrote in Arabic and devoted much time to the study of the work of Aristotle, wrote a famous treatise titled *The Guide for the Perplexed* in which he brought up the issue of witchcraft. He noted, in Chapter XXXVII, that the question of witchcraft belonged to a discussion of "The Divine Commandments" of the Old Testament, since there were specific Laws against such practices. Since a [God-given] "Commandment" demands a strictness of enforcement that ordinary laws don't entail, the seriousness of the matter is almost self-evident. Hence, if it was determined that witchcraft was in violation of a Commandment, the penalty of death was not only expected—it was mandatory. Since women were most noted for the practice of witchcraft, Maimonides made some apologies for that fact and attempted to soften the claim by noting that some men also engage in the practice.

But what was so serious about the process of witchcraft that would lead to a sentence of death? The core issue in Chapter XXXVII of Maimonides' *Guide* is not witchcraft per se; rather it is the violation of the central Commandment of Judaic Monotheism, namely, to respect Monotheism by avoiding any form of *idolatry; witchcraft was arguably the most notorious form of idolatrous behavior.* In essence, the attempt to override natural causation through an act of will

is a demonic attempt to compete with, and usurp, God's creative and regulative power—the power to create and control *Nature.* There were apparently only two modes of engaging with Nature, in Maimonides' view: <u>First</u>, in order to allow for the work of the prophets, God had to make room for **miracles** in Nature, but these singular events are "effected according to the fixed laws of Nature" and are therefore not idiosyncratic; as such, they are comprehendible. (*Guide*, Chapter XXIX, p. 210). <u>Second</u>, since the laws of **causation** govern Nature, these regularities in Nature make it accessible to **reason**. In effect, then, witchcraft is not prophecy: it makes no effort to produce the miraculous. It does attempt, however, to control the direction of natural causation in ways that violate God's purposes and Commandments (*Guide*, Chapter XXXVII, pp. 333ff.). The 'demonic' is defined as the use of force/causation for *non-natural* purposes and thereby overrides God's Commandment against idolatry.

Jesus' 'Principle of Humanity': From *Idolatry* to *Normalization* to *Individuation:*

The presence of misogyny and misogynistic murder in some Christian theocracies would, in itself, seem to justify the indictment and trial of Theism called for by Secular Humanists. The attempt to move women away from *idolatrous witchcraft* would have meant *normalization;* however, gender normalization in an androcentric society seemed an *a priori* abnormality. Jesus' 'principle of humanity', which served to *individuate* the women who surrounded him, is still more a hope than a reality in the contemporary world. While it seems self-evident that Secular Humanists who promote atheism provide the only judiciary platform for placing Salem's Christian Theism on trial, there is still an outlying question that persists, *viz.*, whether one of the earliest judiciary platforms can be found, not in the Testaments per se, but in the "authentic gospel of Jesus." In essence, does the gender *dualism* inherent in Salem's *divisive* Christian Theism become unjustifiable in Jesus' quest for humanization through 'humane Love'? Would Jesus' experimental drive toward humanizing Judaism through his ethics of integration through Love (before attempting to universalize it) have served the defense of the Salem women? Without a fundamentalist Biblical theism, theists could not otherwise account for the gender dualism that accompanied the metaphysical secularization of Nature. When one notes the characterization of the traditional version of the *normal* 'woman' in Kramer and Sprenger's *Malleus Malificarum* (1487, Germany), where women were seen as "a necessary evil, a natural temptation,...a domestic detriment..." etc., it becomes clear that the secularized Nature into which humans were cast in *Genesis* was largely identified with the defiled commonplace condition of women. The beginning of 'modernity' was largely a cleansing of Nature through a cleansing of the secular domain; much, however, is owed to the historical emergence of women in early Christianity. Jesus recognized the danger the secular world faced when its promise of freedom was left in the hands of any theocracy, and he recognized how, in his own world, theocratic rule would stand in the way of the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth.

In his historical move toward a Kingdom of God can be found Jesus' own rejection of the "unsavory" claims embedded in "religion, faith, and superstition." One claim, one that foreshadowed the early Modern *reversal* of the concept of the "Fall of Man," was vital for the humanization of both the secular world and the status of women. What needed to be resisted was the dualistic *metaphysics of closure* evident in Judeo/Platonic metaphysics—a dualism between spirit and nature, between form and matter, between man and 'incomplete' woman. The broad question is whether misogyny and gendercide were the products of early *mimetic* thinking (the term 'witch' has become metonymic for 'woman'), or were they the effects of later *reflexive* thinking rooted in post-mythic language. As Sandywell (1996, vol. I, 329f.) indicates, the gradual Western advance into "reflexive thinking," that is, thinking as a function of "self-awareness," involved a gradual growth away from *object-centered* mimetic thought—from the lower social position of women in antiquity and the mimetic phallocentric theophanies. The process of "*self-reflection*" (self-concern, self-inquiry) gradually brought "moral normalization" and "civil

society" to face the need for a radical *individuation.* While this humanistic work can be found in "the authentic gospel of Jesus"—in the reflexive thinking evident in the Parables of Jesus —*the mimetic view of 'woman' prevailed in the distorted Christianity evident in the Salem Witch Trials.* Perhaps Jesus, though he did not succeed, moved women beyond *normalization* to *individuation*. It took almost two thousand years for the "Principle of Charity" to move moral philosophy from the metaphysical concentration on categorical differences to the variegated world of individuals.

Conclusion: Davidson's "Principle of Charity" and Jesus' Parabolic Resistance to Closure:

If the mind/matter metaphysical dualism—for example, the dualism that pits 'masculine' mind against 'feminine' bodily desire—can be overcome through a philosophical perspective, then *rationality,* no matter what metaphysical religionists say, would have to be an integral component of *anyone's* belief system—whether male or female, Asian or European, African or American. Donald Davidson's 20th century philosophic effort to eliminate the divisions embedded in the portrait of rational transactions led to an idealism that challenged metaphysical conflicts. In his examination of the idealist side of Davidson's position, Simon Evnine (1991) writes:

> The idealist theory of [experiential] content makes irrationality
> hard to explain, or even describe. If what people actually believe is
> constituted by what it is ideally rational for them to believe, then
> how can they have irrational beliefs, and perform irrational
> actions? (Evnine, p. 178.)

Evnine points out that Davidson's philosophical struggle to overcome mind/body dualism runs into some internal problems precisely with respect to the relationship between the 'rational' and the 'irrational'; what seems evident, however, is that the attempt to characterize women, ontologically, simply in terms of irrationality and to claim that this is the basis of idolatry-inspired 'misogyny', is misleading. Since philosophers have attempted to see the differences and/or connections in terms of the governing *laws* of the domains of logic or psychology— whether, for example, women are not governed by the 'psychological laws' that govern rationality and therefore comport themselves irrationally—Davidson's examination of the laws of these domains is helpful. In a general sense, then, the same laws that govern reasonableness in general govern women. In *Genesis*, Eve was fascinated by what the serpent proposed—indeed, that fascination made imagination the driving force of human life: No wonder Kant argued that "Nature is a human Art." Reflecting on Davidson's "Principle of Charity," it would seem that the synchronicity of idolatry and misogyny, in Maimonides and elsewhere, was simply the product of the traditional drive toward the ultimate resolution of conflict through closure, whether metaphysical or narrow socio-cultural observation.

If Jesus had tried to define the issue inherent in the Salem Witch Trials, he would have asked to be heard and to be understood, no more! *"Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile him."* (Mark 7: 14,15.) Nineteen women in Salem were executed by hanging for witchcraft. The Salem judges and executioners, in the name of Christianity, simply failed to "understand" that "witchcraft" cannot "defile" a *parabolic community,* but the killing of nineteen women, which came out of the hearts of their executioners, defiled all involved—because it was in the name of an inauthentic, *metaphysically divisive and uncharitable gospel.* The "authentic gospel of Jesus," supported by a "principle of charity," was simply absent in Salem, Massachusetts, and it is the best part of what is still being sought in the heartfelt quest for Jesus' Return.

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