

A sad story and Genesis 1-3: discerning the presence of the Mother goddess

Francis X. Kroncke

Abstract

As a “slave of the state” a prisoner is “twice-bodied.” The inmate’s name is subordinated to his number, here the author is federal inmate 8867-147. Twice-bodied, he senses humanly and sub-humanly. Using Phyllis Tribble’s concept of sad story and referencing her interpretation of Hagar the Egyptian’s enslavement, the peculiar biblical characteristics of inmate sad stories are described. An unusual aspect of hearing inmate sad stories is that they often have an overt popular biblical framework. A twice-bodied methodology is developed and used to present how the author hears and experiences Genesis 1-3 as a biblical text of terror. When the two biblical creation stories are examined using the twice-bodied methodology, the presence of a Mother Goddess is discerned. The biblical tradition reveals its foundational polytheistic and Mother/Father creators characteristic.

Key Words

Sad story, twice-bodied, Shade Mother, biblical creation stories

1.

Phyllis Tribble’s sad stories

When Phyllis Tribble approached the biblical “texts of terror,” she reflected “on telling sad stories.”¹ These were ancient stories of “the slave used, abused and rejected.” Of “the princess raped and discarded.” Of “an unnamed woman, the concubine raped, murdered and

¹Phyllis Tribble, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1.

dismembered,” and a daughter, “a virgin slain and sacrificed.”² Tribble was further inspired by contemporary sad stories, namely, the sufferings of a black woman, streetwalkers, and homeless women; also by attending a memorial service for nameless women, and from reading an account about finding the dismembered parts of a woman in a trash can. Finally, she mentioned her own “wrestling with the silence, absence and opposition of God.”³

Tribble’s work broke new ground. Though a privileged, white female intellectual, through sympathy and empathy⁴ she implicitly claimed that she understood and so could interpret the personal experiences of the women’s sad stories. The connection between their and her own implied sad story was an emotional bridge, one she described as anchored in her own personal wrestling. Her interpretations of biblical narratives ignited several controversies.⁵ Significantly, Tribble’s analysis and interpretation was accessible to readers, male or female, because sympathy and empathy are general human traits. Similarly, men and women may also wrestle with the silence, absence and opposition of God.⁶

Hagar, the Egyptian’s sad story

As stimulating and challenging as Tribble’s approach to sad stories is, such as that of Hagar, the Egyptian slave (Genesis 16 and 21), how would sad stories assist in understanding and interpreting biblical texts if the slave, Hagar herself, had written Tribble’s article? Suppose that

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 1-2.

⁴ Ibid., 3. “It (feminism) recounts tales of terror *in memoriam* to offer sympathetic readings of abused women.”

⁵ Phyllis Tribble, *God and the rhetoric of sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). Among her uncommon interpretations is that the first human being was created in a state not yet differentiated into male or female.

⁶ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1985). Almost simultaneous with Tribble’s publication, Fiorenza wrote, “Feminist praxis is rooted in the *religious experience* of contemporary women but does *not derive* its inspiration from the Christian past,” xviii. Emphasis added.

Hagar used her own personal, intimate sad story to analyze and interpret biblical texts and stories? Suppose Hagar heard her own story as told in Genesis and then wrote an interpretation? Would it read close to Tribble's interpretation?

What if Hagar claimed that *her enslavement*—with a description of the emotions of abuse, submission, violence, debasement, shame and loss—gave her a *privileged*, albeit peculiar, insight into the meaning of a biblical text? How would Hagar—as she lives her sad story—hear what is said by others about her, here her Hebrew captors? What would she say about the how and why of her captors telling her story as they do in Genesis? Would she reveal insights into how and why her captors spoke about her in the way they did and claim that it reveals dramatically more about them than about her? What if she claimed that her sad story was merely a bit of literary misdirection, drawing hearers away from the sad story of her captors, themselves?

“Slave of the State”

I engage in this hermeneutical fancy because I have been enslaved—consequently, Hagar's story is not fanciful to me.⁷ Significantly, my enslavement resulted from acting upon my interpretation of biblical stories and so violating Caesar's law and becoming classified as a violent felon. I understand how my scriptural and theological interpretations and actions resulted in my enslavement, but it has taken decades for me to discern how my enslavement sad story changed the way I now hear and interpret biblical texts.

As a privileged, white male intellectual I underwent a *qualitative*, heartfelt human

⁷Tribble's courage guides me, “To tell and hear tales of terror is to wrestle demons in the night, without a compassionate God to save us.” *Texts*, 4.

transformation as I became a “slave, used, abused and rejected.” In 1971, after a trial⁸ where, as a lay Roman Catholic theologian, I interpreted the biblical tradition to explain my crime, I was convicted and sentenced to federal prison. I became a “slave of the State.”

Some reject my claim. Their objections cluster around the fact that slavery does not legally exist in America anymore, and/or a claim that imprisonment is not enslavement. Some argue that a woman is always a slave in a patriarchy and that Hagar is categorically a different type of slave than I or any male could ever be. I am sensitive to the peculiarity of the experiential basis for the analysis and interpretive claims I make here. Nonetheless, moved by a sense of obligation, I write on behalf of the imprisoned Hagers, both male and female.⁹

Twice-bodied

The experience I share with Hagar and other slaves, male and female, is that of being “twice-bodied.”¹⁰ I hold that the slave experience means that I have been transformed into a qualitatively different type of being. In truth, that my mind and heartbeat are subhuman. More, I am self-consciously subhuman. As a slave I simultaneously experience myself as a human with all the same desires and wants of others, yet, twice-bodied, in the everyday world of my human captors I am starkly present as a subhuman—of no value, disposable, at any instant my captor’s trash. My slave body no longer senses in a normal human manner. I no longer function in normal time and space. I am “doing time” and am locked up “on the inside.” Once enslaved, from then on, every sensation stimulated by the human world is also felt subhumanly. For example, every

⁸ United States District Court, District of Minnesota, Fifth Division. United States of America, Plaintiff, vs. Francis Xavier Kroncke and Michael Duane Therriault, Defendants 5-70 Criminal 19. www.minnesota8.net/transcripts.htm

⁹ My position is influenced by the “theology from the periphery” of Liberation theologians. Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1987).

¹⁰Slavery existed in many forms in biblical times. Hagar’s capture and sexual enslavement are sufficient grounds to claim that she lived “twice-bodied.”

touch is an act of violence. Every kiss, a betrayal and act of degradation. Every kind word, a call requiring an act of submission. Qualitatively, I am forever simultaneously a human/subhuman in body, mind and soul.¹¹

In stark contrast to Tribble, as a slave I fear that there are certain experiences that *cannot* be accessed through sympathy and empathy, only through shared experience. Truly, I question whether my twice-bodiedness is so categorically “other” that my interpretations of biblical texts and sad stories may not be communicable. What if there is no way that sympathy or empathy can bridge the experiential chasm? What if I am fated to remain *in the world but not of the world*, in a subhuman way that only those who are enslaved accurately and keenly sense? How could my interpretations be accepted if only a rare few reading my sad story had or would ever share a like experience? Is the slave experience so simultaneously subjectively and objectively *other* that writing about it and using it for interpretation might simply be an act of witness more than exposition? I hold these daunting questions in hand as I proceed with the hope that an insight will be disclosed to me concerning how this experiential gap can be bridged.

In all, I write because I am inspired by Tribble’s valuation of sad stories. Her work challenges me to risk speaking with Hagar’s voice in my ears—a voice I hear because it is subhumanly mine. Equally significant, I personally need to risk speaking with my own twice-bodied voice because in prison I encountered the darkly numinous presence of the Holy in a way that defied expression through all my learned categories of interpretation and explanation. In time, with twice-bodied slave senses I heard Genesis 1-3 as a sad story. More—and I hesitate to state this twice-bodied insight because I know how wild, how mad it sounds—I discerned the

¹¹ A slave embodies the “shadow”—his/her own and society’s. I prefer not to use “shadow” since it is laden with psychological definitions and interpretations that I hold cannot *fully* describe and communicate the slave experience of being twice-bodied, especially the experience of being subhuman.

presence of the several biblical divinities it revealed, among them the Mother goddess of the biblical tradition.

My sad story

Initially indicted on “sabotage of the national defense” for destroying Selective Service draft files, I was convicted of a crime committed “by force, violence or otherwise.” I entered prison facing a five year sentence. Not only had I left my Roman Catholic theology and faith strewn on the federal courtroom floor,¹² but my conviction as a violent felon brought forth the condemnation of the local archbishop. His Excellency felt compelled to complement Caesar’s judgment as he circulated a letter forbidding pastors from allowing me, “a criminal,” to enter their pulpits. He concluded, “You have no right to preach in a Catholic Church, nor do you have my permission to do such. With cordial best wishes, sincerely yours....” Condemned felon and interdicted heretic, I was devastated by the loss of my church and my country.¹³

In June 1972, handcuffed and leg chained, I was deposited in Sandstone Federal Correctional Institution’s Admission and Orientation room. In a flash, I became one of *them*—an inmate. The personal transformation that prison effected re-embodied me. I became a subordinated, subjected, dispossessed, expendable, disposable, *invisible* entity. In the eyes of the

¹²Francis X. Kroncke, “Resistance as Sacrament,” *Cross Currents*, XXI, no.4 (Fall 1971), 369. The trial lasted eight days, had thirteen witnesses, and *The Documents of Vatican II*, (ed.) Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: America Press, 1966) were accepted as Defendant Exhibit 6. See trial transcripts and my 2007 memoir MS, “Outlaw or American Patriot?” No pages. Cited June, 2008. Online: <http://www.minnesota8.net/FXKroncke.html> My defense was judged “irrelevant and immaterial” although the judge had to specifically answer the jury foreman by thundering, “You cannot read the *Documents of Vatican Council Two!*”

¹³Francis X. Kroncke, *Patriotism Means Resistance*, 1972 trial memoir. MS. No pages. Cited June, 2008. At arraignment the prosecutor alleged that I was part of “the international Catholic Conspiracy led by the Berrigans” (Catholic priest brothers) and “financed by (Fidel) Castro.” This justified the charge of sabotage of the national defense and a \$50,000 bail.

wardens, guards and society, “Francis X. Kroncke” was no longer physically present. My name was replaced by a number, 8867-147. Here was my first subhuman sense: one of disembodiment—they looked at me and saw *only* 8867-147. I was a numbered inventory of the State.

An initiatory ritual found me stark naked, bereft of personal possessions, washed, sprayed with disinfectant, and given a garb of invisibility as “Francis” disappeared and a disposable piece of societal offal floated into the inmate population. At any time—and it happened often—I was made to halt what I was doing, strip and expose my bodily parts for the inspector’s eyes.¹⁴ Like the streetwalker, my body was not mine. It belonged to my pimp: The Man. I was his amusement as he erotically toyed with me for the pleasure of his fellow hacks. Baton molestation. Relentless public verbal humiliation. Total submission: Even when asleep, my captors continued to eye me with dusk to dawn “Lock up and Count!”’s .

The nightly Counts expose the core subhuman reality: Being a slave means having no privacy in any aspect, either when awake or dreaming. There is no space in which to experience one’s *person* in any normal sense of the term. In prison there is no place to go for a nanosecond of solitude—the johns are doorless, every tick-and-tock you are watched, you live exposed like a lidless eyeball. What may be incommunicable is the devastating impact of living within an utter absence of privacy—doing time “Inside.” I lived and slept in dorms of up to seventy others. It is this absolute loss of privacy that is the key to mutating into a subhuman.

Just as military boot camp can turn a milk-cheeked young woman from America’s most wholesome rural village into a torturer or murderer, so did prison work its heartfelt transformation.

¹⁴For six months I participated in an in-town federal “Right to Read” program where I worked alongside prison employee’s wives and taught some of their children. This required twice daily strip searches. Guard resentment was intense. Their harassments were creative.

Enslavement was achieved by a relentless transforming process that sought total mastery over my inmate body, mind and soul.¹⁵ It took me into a dimension of presence—of degradation, humiliation, abuse—where the twice-bodied slave always remains.

Truly, this enslavement was more than a social, mental or physical experience. It was distinctly spiritual in that my human presence was altered. Horrified, I was no longer present to others as a human being. I looked in the mirror: 8867-147, a subhuman. Flesh: property of The Man, of the State. Truly, condemned to forever exist as an alien other—a twice-bodied presence. I became what prison so effectively creates: a slave of the State.

The most ascetic discipline of my brief years in the seminary and monastery paled in comparison. My body was being sensately rewired. It became a slave's body—*all my physical acts expressed my acceptance of domination*. When ordered to strip and be searched, I complied. Emotionally, I lost my middle-class sense of shame. My sense of personal honor. My dignity. I slavishly bent over and spread my buttock cheeks. My presence conveyed that now I was *The Man's bitch*.

Loss of language and listening

While I never felt guilty in any way, sitting in the barred cage I did ask myself, *Are you wrong?* I heard my deceased father's charge, *Who are you to challenge the Church, the State?* I was at rock bottom, so to speak, and there were no easy answers.

Critical to grasping the particular character and quality of my enslavement was the fact that I lost my language. Humorously, I had spoken "Roman Catholic" all my life. I spoke and preached and cross-examined and testified and prophesized. Now, my tongue was paralyzed. I neither read

¹⁵Francis X. Kroncke, "Prison, Bottoming Out, Mother," *Cross Currents*, XXVIII, no. 1 (Spring 1988), 53. Here, the prison discipline is described as a *process of patriarchal feminization*.

nor wrote nor spoke in pre-prison tongue. Unable to do other than banter, I discouraged visits, except from my immediate family. As with Tribble, I began a fierce “wrestling with the silence, absence and opposition of God.”

This loss of language heightened my sensitivity to the sad stories of other inmates. If I had retained a patina of Catholic identity or a desire to reclaim myself as an American, I would have spent my time constructing a “glad” story that would serve to protect me from prison’s cruelties and numb my twice-bodied sensing. I would have walked around the Yard telling myself that I was “still a good Catholic” and making plans to find a way after prison to serve the Church. Or tell myself that I was “a true American,” a dissenter like the Founders, and making plans to reclaim my citizenship through activism once released. It would be a glad story that prevented my hearing my own sad story. Since I could not speak, I could not hear myself weave such a glad story. Rather, I could only listen. It was then that I heard the sad stories that opened to me the meaning of Genesis 1-3 as a biblical text of torture.

As I listened I realized—ironically, a bit amusingly—that I was not supposed to be hearing these stories as a fellow subhuman. Clearly, prison had not been projected to be a chapter in my personal or socioeconomic class’s career story. As a highly educated, white, middle-class male I was an odd and rare inmate, one, in a sense, who *chose* prison. Other inmates knew that smart guys like me could always work a plea bargain. They were baffled by my commitment to nonviolence, especially the insanity of baiting and taunting The Man by publicly encouraging criminal acts of civil disobedience, draft resistance and accepting responsibility for the destruction of draft board files.¹⁶

¹⁶ With others I took “personal and political responsibility” for the February, 1970 draft raids of the Minneapolis-St. Paul *Beaver* 55, “but we’re not going to say we did it.” Tens of thousands of files were destroyed, including the first-ever destruction of a State Director’s draft office.

In a significant way my class perspective and intellectual background did prove useful. Since I was the odd man out for both my captors and my fellow convicts, I was aware of my twice-bodiedness in a way that most inmates were not. It was psychologically and spiritually overwhelming to simultaneously live in two-bodies. In time, most inmates surrendered to one-bodiedness by accepting being just a convict. They “adjusted” and, as advised, “Do your own time!” They focused on living inside and stopped thinking and feeling as best they could about outside, Free World people and events. In like manner, captors resisted the two-bodied awareness. That is why everything inside prison is reduced to harsh and cruel black-and-white conditions. The guards must distance themselves from inmates as humans in order to remain within one-body consciousness. They want the inmate to be other or alien, and they refuse to recognize themselves in the faces of the cons—with whom they share several salient social characteristics, such as being or coming from the working poor, the marginally educated and as military veterans. When talking with me, the guards were initially attracted by but then rejected my social status as a potential teacher, minister or fellow bureaucrat. Over time, I myself was fatigued by trying to be twice-bodied and I slipped away from my family, all visitors and contact with the “outside world.” I played a lot of basketball.

Nevertheless, my personal, social and academic background enabled me to recognize twice-bodied realities that others denied, notably my captors. Without slipping into shallow generalizations, it is important to understand that prison is a social institution established to manage certain types of errant individuals. Just a bit of observation (and some academic reading¹⁷) and the historical role of prisons in America has been to handle its misfits and

¹⁷On parole from 1973-1977 I was a prison project director for the Quaker affiliated American Friends Service Committee in San Francisco. I completed four years of study in a joint doctoral program of the University of California, Berkeley and the Graduate Theological Union in Historical Studies (“ABD”). My primary document

outcasts. These are in the main the chronically poor, functionally illiterate, ambulatory mentally ill, immigrants, Native People, those labeled “alien,” and the marginalized descendants of historically former slaves.¹⁸ Of greater note is that prison controls the groups from which these individuals come—this grounds a core insight for understanding sad stories, namely, that *sad stories are group stories*. For example, Afro-American inmates often declared that prison was simply an extension of the ghetto and part of the ongoing story of black slavery. Crimes on Native American reservations are federal, and prison as an extension of the reservation system was clearly evident at a Midwestern prison such as Sandstone.

Biblical conversations

Tribble noted that “a black woman describe(d) herself as a daughter of Hagar outside the covenant ...an abused woman on the streets of New York with a sign, *My name is Tamar*.”¹⁹ Likewise, I found that in prison twice-bodied consciousness was often biblically self-aware. More, I realized that inmate group stories were grounded in *deep cultural sad stories*. This insight caught me off-guard. As I listened to inmates stories I was taken aback with the clarity with which they mirrored biblical stories. Should I have been surprised? When listening to academic philosophers, theologians or other intellectuals, I would not have paused if they framed their views and beliefs in a deep cultural story, here in Western culture’s biblical stories. I would have considered it a bit of literary artfulness for one of them to identify with a mythic character, say, compare themselves to Job or Odysseus or Jesus. Yet I was surprised to encounter this

research MS on “The Religious Influence on the Rise of the Penitentiary, 1787-1822” is ongoing. No pages. Cited June 2008. Online: <http://www.minnesota8.net/KronckePenitentiary.pdf>

¹⁸Most cons are at least partially State-raised convicts, cycling through foster homes, jails, the military, prison, rehab programs and homelessness.

¹⁹ Tribble, *Texts*, 1-2.

framework on the popular level. Here, my academic prejudices (an aspect of my group story) almost obscured a crucial insight about how popular versions of biblical stories can provide insight into interpreting texts. Like the proverbial foxhole that converts atheists, prison brought out the philosopher and theologian in every con. “Being down, doing time on the Inside” had a way of quickly stripping the veneer off of street-smart inmates.

I cannot overstate the importance of understanding this biblical framework of everyday conversation. More importantly, these inmate conversations were properly mythic in that they were gut-checks and not airy intellectual fugues. These popular biblical stories had meaning for inmates in a passionate way. They anchored how they deeply felt about life, other people, their families, America, etc. For example, inevitably, when the issue of violence versus nonviolence, or racism versus universal brotherhood, or sexism versus the equality of women arose, inmates would mention Cain and Abel, Original Sin, Adam’s dominion in the Rib account, and/or God’s wrath as just punishment.

Notably, these biblical renditions enabled the inmate to effectively defuse the heartfelt fury, rage, anger and other violences that seethed through our conversations. For example, if I talked about nonviolence, guys would look at me as if I were truly stupid. Didn’t I know about Cain and Abel? “Brothers fighting is the way it is!” As I’d dissent they would erupt into denunciation and threat—and profanities that I cannot print here would color their discourse.

Understand that my challenging violence was like denying that gravity existed. Since I was in prison jargon a “big man” (tall and athletic) my denouncing violence must be hiding—“Errr, you ain’t queer, big man, now ain’t ya?” The routinely leveled charge that nonviolent people were queers revealed, in spades, how their understanding of violence was intertwined with *sexual violence*. More conversations than not were spiced with “Slap the bitch!” accounts,

and if that was challenged, I'd hear about Eve and women as seducers—actually, whores was the favored image. You might not think that guys would say—but they did—“God took ‘em from me,” as a rib was tapped, and the simple theological point made that, “Wimmen are meant to serve their man. That’s what my preacher say!”

Then a twice-bodied insight burst forth. Prison was all about “Slap the bitch!” and the bitch was me! Prison’s relentless degradation was turning me into the stereotypical patriarchal woman who only found meaning through submission to her man. “Adam and Eve! Adam and Eve, man!” I was Eve. More—and nothing in my past prepared me for the next insight—what most drew from the Garden story was that the phallus is supreme (described more colorfully). It might be hard to believe but it was said, “Why was the guy first?” Meaning, Adam was created first and Eve from his body. This “fact” was uttered as if making a biological claim.²⁰

This phallic claim was ritually acted out Inside. Since I had no homosexual experiences nor had I ever engaged in any “sexually imaginative” practices other than the missionary posture for intercourse, I did not quite grasp what these men meant when I first heard this phallic supremacy claim. Prison reality was, during the first half-hour after lights-out, that blankets were draped around bunks and phallic activities ensued—noisily. Certain inmates were addressed—even by the guards—with feminine names. I learned how “bitches” were bartered and traded, with cigarettes being currency. When I brought this nightly activity into a conversation I quickly learned that what lingered beneath the surface of just about everything Inside was an act of sexual violence. Triumphant violence meant sodomizing your enemy. Sodomizing was the ultimate victory and defeat. Usually when I pressed the topic—those inmates who were war veterans would look at me and laugh, a bitter, dismissing, “You’re really f****d, man,” and then

²⁰ Bartolo di Fredi’s “Creation of Eve,” 1356, represents this literal belief. See picture.

(given the era) they would talk about Vietnam and “the things we did,” of which sodomizing the enemy (men and women) was the lesser sin.

In sum, what did I learn Inside that I hadn’t in graduate school? These popular biblical conversations taught me that 1) popular understanding came primarily from *preaching*. Inmates had heard their theology from the pulpit more than from bible class. This was consonant with street life which is primarily an oral culture. 2) Popular stories were *melded stories*. For example, there was no awareness that the Bible was a literary text with accounts written at different times and by various authors. All was written by God or Moses or Jesus. So what happened in Genesis 1-3 was read as if it was all the same story. This was another impact of an inmate’s biblical theology being formed by preaching more than reading. 3) With that, further *melding these ancient stories with an inmate’s personal life, right now*, was unchallenged. God was acting—“Right here in Sandstone, man!”—and these popular accounts were as relevant and useful as reading the daily newspaper. These three insights became increasingly significant to me as I struggled to determine how to interpret individual and group stories and understand how they expressed the deep cultural stories of a family.

With not much brushing away of surface emotions, from inmate hearts came the confident assertion that the biblical God had created the world with Us vs. Them with enemies all about. This simple duality was divine revelation.

These popular biblical stories were deeply heartfelt. While in the academic world scholars questioned whether there existed and/or attempted to define America’s Civil Religion or a public religion or a popular faith, on the Inside inmate conversations confirmed that biblical stories were vital in providing answers to life’s big questions. Most notably, this popular Biblicism provided a justification for sexual violence. With twice-bodied sensing, coffee time

conversations revealed a persistent biblical framework.

Mythic sad stories

I listened endlessly to sad stories because all I had was time. Since I lived in overcrowded dorms, often double-bunked, the lack of private space continually hummed with public conversations. When not in the dorm, I was assigned a “make do” desk job where I idled away day time—I rarely worked two hours a week. For hours at a time, guys would gather, drink coffee and swap stories. What the stories were not, is academic conversation. They were about all the meaning of the capital letter issues: Life, Death, Violence, Justice, Sex, etc. —and they were as raw as life can get.

I found their stories primal and mythic. Every teller was an outlaw. With street smarts, not academic insights, they were aware that they were living outside the lawful social order and cultural story—that they had committed crimes, transgressed, violated taboos of Church and State. I heard the most horrific, fantastic, gut-wrenching stories—bloodied truths from society’s internecine battlefield—truly, profoundly sad stories. Their stories were mythic in that prison—the Inside, the Hole, the Cage: the land of the twice-bodied— was a “given,” even an acceptable path of their lifestyle, for many, of their job. Prison grounded their story of personal identity, their understanding of the meaning of life: *Survive at any cost!* It gave primal meaning in a way that only other outlaws could grasp—it granted and validated their identity, and endowed them with a twice-bodied moral vision (which their captors saw as immoral).

Commonly, their tales were filled with swagger and boasts about how they had boldly crossed the line, broken the rules, cast aside the suffocating “American dream” and gone their own way. With a curious bravado, instead of feeling small by being enslaved, their condition emboldened them—for some it was an ego boost! They sensed that they were living life large and on the big stage. “Me versus The Man.” Tragically— from my perspective—it was a battle steeped

in an endless cycle of violence that both defeated and revitalized them. Yet I sensed that few were not cowed—and hopelessly broken in spirit—by the experience of being judged, convicted and thrown out of society, by being enslaved.

While I was shocked at the brutality, casual violence and sheer perversity of most stories—before ever having read Trible—I felt their stories were truly sad in that these men would continue to live a life of submission, of being dominated. Fatefully, for many, myself included, what lay ahead was living the twice-bodied outlaw life and, statistically, a high rate of return to prison or jail.²¹

In sum, as I listened many biblical stories came alive. The deep cultural mythic stories became current: Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden. Brother against brother: As Cain they rejoiced in bloodshed. The war of the sexes: As Adam they boasted about dominating their women—“Slapped the bitch!” Acts of abusive parents: Thrown out of their homes (gardens of Eden) by condemning, often sexually abusive and rageful parents. All chapters in the family’s biblically rooted sad story that could be aptly titled, “Sinners in the hands of an angry god.”²²

Family stories

Being on trial made me painfully aware in a way I had never been about my own group story. For eight days, I spoke as attorney pro se to the judge and jury. It was clear that explaining why I committed my crime of nonviolence could only be understood if the jurors grasped the character of my family, my faith community, my ethnic identity and my class background (the latter expressed in terms of my access to higher education). As the trial ended and I was sentenced, I

²¹I heard it too often to pass off as insignificant that many cons were more comfortable on the inside than in the Free World.

²² Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, ed. Harry S. Stout (Vol. 22 in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, vols. 1-26, Yale Univ. Press, 1957-2008).

had a twice-bodied insight that baffled me because I was still in my one-bodied mind. I realized that *my family was going to send me to prison*. This was a curious statement, clearly. But I realized that in my family story there was a belief in fairness, justice, and the moral obligation to take responsibility for one's actions. So my family heard the verdict and tacitly agreed, said, *Take him away!*

In the visiting room I saw this same curious truth demonstrated by how families accepted their inmate's incarceration. The difference I discerned, however, was crucial to how I came to understand sad stories. These families—unlike mine—were *consciously* twice-bodied. For example, many Afro-American families were aware that their inmate was captured committing a crime, tried by a jury and lawfully sentenced. In that light, by accepting incarceration as did my family, they saw themselves as law-abiding Americans. Yet, this was the era of the “Black Power”²³ movement, and they also knew that the System was racist, a form of modern slavery, fundamentally incapable of providing a black with a fair trial, run by white folk, and so forth. These families—again unlike mine—had “doing time” as a recurring theme through their generational family sad story.

The family's sad story mediated the individual's personal sad story and exposed how it expressed the deeper cultural and mythic sad story. An inmate's family sad story was framed by historical facts, cultural values and spiritual visions. This provided a major clue as to how to listen to a sad story, that is, to hear it as *a family sad story first and as an individual inmate one second*. Equally, it was a clue to understanding that *the inmate's family sad story was an*

²³“Black Power”—a cluster of ideologies prominent in the late 1960s and early 1970s—emphasized racial pride and the creation of black political and cultural institutions. Black Power fought against an elusive yet visible higher power known as “white supremacy.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Power

interpretive key for unlocking the captor's sad story. Questions arose: Why did the captor have to enslave some enemy—African-Americans, Native people—time and again throughout history? Why did the captor have to define someone as enemy, as other, as alien in order tell his glad story?

My twice-bodiedness sensed that these were Hagar's questions. Indeed, as I listened it was not uncommon for an inmate to turn his sad story around and use it to tell me how screwed up my captor family story was. "Don't say, you believe there is justice? You must be a whiteboy!" came to me with ancestral slave chains clattering. In this light, Hagar's sad story, I hold, exposes more about the Hebrew sad story than it does about her own plight as a captive Egyptian and sex slave. In like manner, I came to understand the sad story of my captor class and my family even more deeply than I did those of other inmates.

I soon discerned that prison could have been part of my professional career path—I could have chosen employment as a captor. In a way that I would never have realized if not enslaved, I came from the captor class. My prison case manager, a former Catholic priest, was my alter ego, and initially other inmates viewed me much like they did him. Tapping the educational and professional skills I shared with him, inmates sought my counsel and asked me to read letters from home and respond, write to the parole board, and discuss how, if ever, they could find community groups that would help them write a new chapter in their life's story. Fatefully, this opened the way, every day, to my hearing numerous inmate sad stories and so making me acutely aware of my family's captor story.

My twice-bodied consciousness, then, put me in an almost perverse situation. My group and my family had never told me a sad story, only the glad story of the captor. *Inside, I walked around as my own captor!* Eventually, this proved to be an unbearable burden of self-awareness. It

became the straw that finally broke me, and near the end of my time Inside I slunk away from everyone and everything, bouncing a basketball as I started walking down the dark night's road.

2.

Mother of the twice-bodied

Paroled in 1973, I entered upon a ten year “dark night of the soul.” During that time I moved to where nobody knew my name, got into corporate sales, married, fathered two sons and rarely attended a formal religious service. Yet, in search of understanding my twice-bodiedness, I pursued historical and theological studies. In 1979 I passed my doctoral exams but an economic crisis derailed my academic career.²⁴ Then in 1983 I began writing down my sad story. I asked myself, “Why didn't you kill yourself while in prison?” The answer, I sensed, was in understanding my subhumanness—in listening to my own sad story.

As I began to write, it became clear that all my prior education and experiences would be of scant help in describing my subhuman experiences in prison. Little in all that I had studied²⁵ offered stories or language that connected with or expressed my emotional, heartfelt condition. I felt totally odd as I struggled to find words and images to describe twice-bodiedness. Words like subhuman, slave, The Man's bitch—these were not in the theological dictionary or the tomes of spiritual directors.

²⁴California's “Proposition 13” in June 1979 changed how property was taxed. The governor froze hiring at every educational level.

²⁵ Influences on my desire to find Her included Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: an analysis of the archetype* (Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series, 1972). *Black Elk Speaks: being the life story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, told through John. G. Neihardt (University of Nebraska Press, 1979). The works of Joseph Campbell, Mircea Eliade, and most significantly those of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. See Francis X. Kroncke, “Teilhard de Chardin's Personalizing Universe,” St. John's University library, 1966.

Tellingly, when published, the last line of my sad story read, “At the bottom, I met the Goddess who is present as Mother.”²⁶

I wrote this, but *I did not know what it meant*. I had read the early feminist theologians and nascent Goddess movement “theaologists,”²⁷ but this wasn’t their Her. Not Mary or Isis or Tonantzin or Gaia. Rather, the word *Mother* came to my tongue because I just knew that it wasn’t the presence of the Father (at least as I knew Him at that time). The words Mother and Father were not as important to me as conveying the truth that in the cruel darkness, someone was present who held me and embraced me. Let me be crystal clear about this—this was not a comforting, motherly presence. Not a “Good Mother” or mommy touch. It definitely was not one of protection. Rather, *this Mother was present to me as she accepted my enslavement*. She kept me alive, and did not allow me to kill myself. Of note, She did not sever my chains. I hated Her.

I feared Her. She refused to let me escape into fantasy or denial—to write a glad story. She braced me with Her arms when I cringed and howled against the violence. I did not understand Her way of mothering because—although She was present as my knees buckled, my soul was raped, my body thrown on the garbage heap of psychic violence that was prison’s heartbeat—She did not relieve me of my suffering. She accepted that I was The Man’s bitch.

Who was She, who rocked me to sleep each night with soothing slave lullabies?

Twice-bodied listening

During the same period when Tribble opened discussions about sad stories, I went back to Genesis.

In my heart I carried the presence of my prison Mother, and although I sensed that the Bible would

²⁶Kroncke, “Prison, Bottoming Out, Mother,” 53.

²⁷Among them, Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973 and 1985). *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978 and 1990). Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* (University of California Press, 1974). Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper, 1979).

offer little insight into who She was, I thought it would provide a negative starting point, that is, clarify who She was not. I was seeking a mythic and spiritual language that went beyond the biblical tradition, but before I started my theological imaginings of who She might be, I wanted to know in detail how and why I had deviated from the traditional theological interpretations of biblical stories. After all, few other theologians followed the “Catholic Radical”²⁸ interpretation that led me to describe the draft office as a sacred space of the evil god of violence and in which I performed a ritual of exorcism. I hoped that this negative knowledge would help me move away in a positive manner from the biblical tradition towards language and imagery to begin my journey towards writing about Her.

In this frame of mind, I went back to Genesis simply to clarify for myself what the biblical tradition said and identify those stories that I had misinterpreted so badly. I was twice-bodied and accepted that I was an outlaw—that my nonviolent disobedience violated Torah, Canon and American law. Notably, I accepted that I had to respect these stories if I was to fully and finally understand why, where and how I had erred and gone wrong—or had rightly rejected them.

What had I heard differently than the vast majority of biblical people had? Or what hadn’t I heard that they did? I didn’t want back into the Church or America. I didn’t want to be a reformer, either. I simply wanted to clearly discern and honestly understand how and why I had read/misread the biblical stories.

Although I thought this would be a quick and easy exercise, in no time I found myself stuck in Genesis’s first chapters, especially the Rib story. I knew Genesis but then I had to accept

²⁸Influenced by the social justice spirituality and practice of the Catholic Worker movement and that of Vatican Council II, “Catholic Radical” nonviolent communities of war resistance developed within the Catholic Left. CRs were participated in draft board raids made famous by the priests Daniel and Philip Berrigan. See Marian Mollin, “Communities of Resistance: Women and the Catholic Left of the Late 1960s.” *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 31, 2004.

that I really didn't.²⁹ Of the two biblical stories of origin, I knew that the Rib story dominated the interpretation of Genesis in the mainstream Christian tradition—due in great part to the influence of the early Church Father, Augustine of Hippo.³⁰ Still, something kept me going back over and over this story. What was happening?

I wasn't intellectually stuck. My post-prison doctoral studies had made me familiar with a range of biblical scholarship that was mainstream and cutting-edge. However, still in my dark night, I didn't use current scholars as guides. Rather, I plumbed my own heartfelt emotions. Why couldn't I get out of the Rib story? What was keeping me there?

I soon realized that I resisted acknowledging Her presence—that my prison Mother was there in Genesis, once again bracing me, forcing me to stay, barring the exit. Here, again, this Mother who was always willing to watch me suffer. For some reason—so I sensed Her intention—I had to “do time” in the Garden of Eden.

“Doing Garden time” aptly describes the experience upon which all of my insights into the character of my enslavement, the purpose prison serves in the formation of sad stories, and how I learned to interpret and theologize are sourced and grounded. “Doing Garden time” is the wellspring for my hermeneutical insights and method.

It is essential to grasp that my time in the Garden of Eden was like a return to prison's visiting room. There I had observed, in great detail, a key aspect of how inmates who told me

²⁹As to Gen 1-3, “This text has been one of the most interpreted, reinterpreted and misinterpreted texts within the Old Testament.” Abraham, Joseph. “Feminist Hermeneutics and Pentecostal Spirituality: the Creation Narrative of Genesis as Paradigm.” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, (2003, 6:1), 13.

³⁰ Since the late fourth century, Augustine of Hippo's interpreting the Rib Story with a focus on the Fall, Original Sin and Woman as Temptress has dominated Biblical theology. In 1536, John Calvin wrote, “Original sin, therefore, appears to be a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul, rendering us obnoxious to the Divine wrath...” *A Compend of the Institutes of Religion*,” (ed.) Hugh T. Kerr (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 43.

their sad stories were interacting with their families. Often, the inmate moved into the dynamics of the lie. He would confess the errors of his ways in an attempt to remain within the family's good graces. He wanted the family to accept him upon release. So he promised and swore that he would change, that he would go straight, fly right and come home reformed by biblical, mainly Christian, virtues. In one sense, he was saying that he was going to act like a normal, decent human being. However, in the eyes and bodily movements of the families, I could read how untrue they knew this was. They knew that in the visiting room almost everything was an act or word of misdirection. They were tuned into and hearing the inmate's subhuman voice. They felt the bloodlust in his subhuman heart. They knew that he wanted revenge and that instead of getting better their inmate family member was getting worse—more violent.

Once the visiting room performance was over, all inmates had to stand naked and be inspected. Back inside, inmates would often break out into spates of verbal, even physical violence. Cursing. Swearing. Kicking things. They were releasing the tension of lying. More than once, someone would mutter, "Ain't gonna have no more visits. No sirree!"

Their sad story required that they lie, that they misdirect their families. They knew that everyone wanted to hear, "I'm reformed!" or "I'm saved!" The families did not want to acknowledge the twice-bodied sad story that predicted that a high percent of their present teenage/young adult generation would also end up "doing time." They knew—without quoting recidivism statistics—that their inmate would more than likely offend again, end up back in prison. Truly, the families knew all the lies, knew that in the visiting room lying was required to shield everyone—captors and slaves, family and society—from the violent truth of their twice-bodied subhumanness.

Methodology of the twice-bodied

Gradually, the methodology of the twice-bodied took form. Its grounding was the experience a slave has of a peculiar sense of presence that emerges as he grasps that *what is reality for the slave is not so for the captor*. That what is visible is invisible, and vice versa. That what is directly stated is misdirection.

For example, a visitor to the prison yard saw neatly dressed, seemingly pacific, even mannerly men, but not the psychic pools of blood on the ground. Prison appeared quiet. Visitors did not hear the cacophony of a lifetime of violent whacks and thuds, the whimperings of the violently raped, the cracklings of bone as arms were broken, skulls split, and ribs shattered by batons and bullets that ricocheted off prison walls. As visitors walked through the dorms and cell blocks, they did not sniff the ineradicable odors of nightly sodomy. Visitors saw prison's sad story with glad story eyes. They heard with glad story ears. They proclaimed, "Isn't the American system of justice the most enlightened, most fair, most!" They had no *experiential* way to grasp the sad story of the invisible twice-bodied slaves. Or to discern that the guard's tour guide banter caused them to miss what was obvious, namely, that they were in humankind's hell.

Searching for hints of misdirection, I challenged the way I had heard Genesis before prison. I first heard Gen. 1-3 in catechism class, as a foundational religious story, and one that the nuns simultaneously translated into popular socio-cultural messages and values. In graduate school, I listened to scholarly analyses and interpretations, and came to value these over the nuns' popularizations. Now after detecting the biblical framework of inmate sad stories, I re-evaluated my approach and decided to meld the popular with the scholarly. I would guide my analysis and interpretation using scholarship while simultaneously testing everything against the insights of the sad stories that came through the popular discourse that was grounded in the

everyday event of drinking coffee with other inmates. With the clues that scholarship offered, I would focus on the Genesis stories as if formed by contemporary popular culture and popular religion, *as if hearing these sad stories in prison's visiting room*. As I began to listen to Gen. 1-3 as if back in prison, it presented itself as a story alive in contemporary imagination and spirituality.³¹

Finally, I would add my own sad story to this melding, and analyze and evaluate with my subhuman sensing, which meant listening to my prison Mother as she guided me. My interpretive matrix included: 1) inmate popular biblical renditions, 2) scholarly insights, 3) my personal sad story experience as it interacts with my captor's glad story, and 4) the guidance of my prison Mother.

In sum, how did doing time and listening to inmate sad stories impact my approach to listening to and interpreting a biblical sad story? Though other literary and theological researchers³² cite one or more of the following points, I note them because they rose out of my heartfelt slave experience.

- Listen to sad stories as if hearing them in prison's visiting room.

³¹William G. Dever, "Folk Religion in Early Israel: Did Yahweh have a Consort?," *Aspects of Monotheism*, 1996. (ed) Hershel Shanks and Jack Meinhardt (Biblical Archaeological Society) N.P.

<http://www.basarchive.org/bswbBrowse.asp?PubID=BSBKAM&Volume=0&Issue=0&ArticleID=3&UserID=2238> (accessed 6/9/2008). He seeks a "picture of popular religion" to counter the record of the Bible's scribal elites.

³²Roland Boer, "The Fantasy of Genesis 1-3," *Biblical Interpretation*, 14,4, p. 309-331. Online:

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=21466808&site=ehost-live> (accessed June 13, 2008). "As far as Gen. 1-3 is concerned, (there are) a series of subversive hints," 311. He sees a "distinct political or ideological message" that "lies somewhat hidden," 311. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Goddesses: Biblical Echoes," *Feminist Approaches to the Bible*, 1995, (ed.) Hershel Shanks. Online:

<http://www.basarchive.org/bswbBrowse.asp?PubID=BSBKFA&Volume=0&Issue=0&ArticleID=3&UserID=2238> N.P. She hears "echoes"—here of goddess worship.

- Sad stories are group stories that are carried through time by the family. Individuals die, the family lives on. Family stories ground and mediate the deeper social and cultural sad story. Group stories are best recognized and heard by listening to a family's sad story.
- Sad stories omit as much as they state. For example, the official prison story does not describe inmates as slaves or subhuman. It is a story that does not expose the twice-bodiedness of slaves or the one-bodiedness of captors.
- In sad stories always look for the invisible that companions the visible. Francis X. Kroncke is 8867-147 as Francis disappears, becomes a subhuman.
- Accept that sad story language is at once literal, symbolic and mystical. For example, prison's organizational procedure (institutional language) that doors have no knobs and are locked until the inmate calls for a guard to open it is simultaneously (literally) a simple regulation, (symbolically) an act of domination/submission, and (mystically) a making present of the inmate as a subhuman.
- Without the storyteller's intention, insights into the meaning of a sad story often occur through misdirection. For example, a sad story's focus is often on individual errant behavior and so hides the interplay of the sad story of the slave and the captor.
- Understanding a sad story depends less upon an individual's personal self-awareness or intellectual understanding of his own story than upon how his story is grounded in the institutional rituals, rules, habits, customs, policies, regulations and disciplines that structure and express the emotional quality of presence. For example, prison guards were normally restrained, even forbidden, to personally enslave an inmate, rather, enslavement occurred as a guard went about "just doing my job."
- Value the various aspects of the interpretive matrix that includes melding1) inmate

popular biblical renditions, 2) scholarly insights, 3) my personal sad story experience as it interacts with my captor's glad story, and 4) the guidance of my prison Mother.

3.

Two biblical stories of origin

As I did Garden time, I wondered, What is it that I am hearing? Is this a family story? Is there misdirection? What is invisible? What is not being said? Is there a lie in its truth? What does She, my prison Mother, want me to experience and understand?

The most striking characteristic of the biblical tradition was its two quite different stories of origin. In Genesis 1, a seemingly polytheistic voice proclaimed, "Let *us* make man in our image." This was linked with an ostensibly quite clear statement about the simultaneous creation, and so implied equality, of the original humans, to wit, that "male and female created He them." So this creation account seemed to assert a primal equality between male and female, and implied an "us" which did not rule out discerning the presence of a Mother goddess or goddesses. I mused, Was my prison Mother one of the "us"?

In the "us" and "created He them" account there was nothing which the hearer was asked to imagine that he or she had not already pondered. The first audience to Chapter 1's account knew about or were practitioners of polytheistic religions, that is, religions with many gods and goddesses.³³ They were men and women who knew the obvious facts of life, namely, that it took a man and a woman to make a child and so perpetuate the family of humankind. In brief, in Chapter

³³ Dever, "Folk Religion." In the early Israelite period, "By far the most intriguing cultic artifacts that archeologists have recovered are more than 2,000 mold-made terra cotta female figures, found in all sorts of context." Most are of Asherah/Anat, the consort of the male deity in Canaan. William F. Albright calls them "dea nutrix figurines" (nurturing goddesses).

1, there was not much new in terms of facts or truths. What was visible seemed obvious and commonplace. Not so, however, with the second account.

In Chapter 2's Rib story, Adam was alone, talking with his god, who also was alone. There were no goddesses about. There were no women. When Adam felt his aloneness, his god formed a woman, Eve, from a rib that he excised from Adam when in a "deep sleep." The Rib account grounded ideas that were wildly imaginative. Almost every sentence and image begged the questions: What is not being said? What is invisible? Is this literal, symbolic and/or mystical? This story began to baffle me as it activated my twice-bodied senses.

Since I was aware of biblical research, notably the documentary hypothesis,³⁴ I wondered why the biblical people heard two creation stories. Why did the tradition keep both, especially in light of how obviously different they were? Certainly they weren't originally placed there to confuse people. A flurry of questions arose: Do these stories stand alone? Is it merely a trivial fact that there are two stories? Or were they meant to be heard together? Are they two parts of a greater whole? Do they somehow meld and form one grander family story? Is there a melded story that weaves visibly and invisibly through both stories? If so, how could I discern it?

I listened and heard Chapter 1 to be a glad story. It was upbeat, poetic, inspiring, and appeared to give comfort to the hearer that all was well with the world because "God saw that it was good." It could easily be read literally. However, as in the visiting room, I realized that something was missing, namely, the dark side of creation. Pain, suffering, death and the like were not about. "Let us" was a glad story through and through, it did not present the reader with a sad story.

³⁴Arising from 18th and 19th century research, the documentary hypothesis holds that the writings of the Pentateuch derive from originally independent narratives, identified as J, E, D and P. Genesis 1 is E, a prose poem with a metaphysical texture. The Rib is J, written earlier and often considered to be allegorical.

In stark contrast, the Rib story instilled fear, dread, even horror into the mind and soul. God was enraged. Life on earth was a profoundly sad story. “The Man” Yahweh was kicking human posteriors in and outside the Garden. It was a wildly imagined sad story. It could not be read literally as every aspect of the story seemed fantastic—a solitary human, no Mother goddess, a woman derived from a male rib, and so forth. More, this Garden of Eden was supposedly paradise. Was this an intentional act of misdirection? With twice-bodied senses: Was it a lie?

For some reason the biblical family needed to hear two stories or origin—I still was not exactly sure why.

In sum, I knew how scholars approached the text and I valued their insights, yet my twice-bodied sense indicated that something unusual was afoot with these two stories. I wondered, If the glad and sad/captor and captive stories were heard together with twice-bodied sensings would a grander family story emerge?

Who was the biblical story-teller?

As in the visiting room, it was important to discern more about the family who was telling this Genesis story. Scholars were in disagreement about the most basic history and characteristics of the biblical family, Israel.³⁵ For them, Gen. 1-3 was written by a family either of conquerors, or peaceful infiltrators, or peasant revolutionaries.³⁶ However, for me, the significant characteristic

³⁵ Dever, “Folk Religion.” Spiritually, culturally and socio-economically, the Bible was “an elitist document” written by “priests, prophets and scribes who were intellectuals and religious reformers” as well as members of the “orthodox nationalist Yahwist parties (the Priestly and Deuteronomic schools),” and so “hardly representative of the majority in ancient Israel.” The Bible is “a minority report.”

³⁶ “No clear consensus among scholars has evolved.” The conqueror tale was longstanding in Biblical research. Albrecht Alt forwarded the “peaceful infiltration model.” Norman Gottwald favored the “peasant revolt” that was part of the “social revolution at the end of the late Bronze Age.” Hershel Shanks, William G. Dever, Baruch Halpern and P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., “Defining the Problems: Where we are in debate,” *The Rise of Ancient Israel* (Resident Associate Program, Smithsonian Institute), 1991. Online, Biblical Archaeology Society, N.P.,

was that the stories were set next to one another after a religious crisis that was grounded in the experience of exile.³⁷

Exile: I listened with visiting room ears. Whoever they were or whenever they became consciously aware of themselves as “Israelites,” this family knew defeat, subjection, humiliation, abuse, enslavement and homelessness, among other suffered violences. They were war refugees, displaced people, and aliens. In prison, I heard sad stories from veterans, immigrants, migrants, homeless men, and native people. All had post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD)³⁸ memories. Often, I’d hear wild, strange and perplexing stories. The one constant in all sad stories, however, was that of the unrelenting violence inflicted upon the storyteller. Critically, what surfaced was the key interpretive point that inmate sad storytellers imagined *a revenge story* that had them inflicting unrelenting violence on those who had oppressed them. Simply, the oppressed sought to become the oppressor—the captive, the captor.

Prisoner sad stories often concluded by positng a glad story as beginning at that moment when revenge was exacted upon whoever was the perceived enemy. Most often it was another person—at times, family members, although in general each con also wanted to find a way to strike back at The Man. Yet, the dynamic of note was that the prisoner consciously planned to “Do unto others as they done to me!” It was a cycle of violence that guaranteed that a sad story

<http://www.basarchive.org/bswbBrowse.asp?PubID=BSBKRA&Volume=0&Issue=0&ArticleID=1&UserID=2238>

(accessed 6/9/2008)

³⁷ At the least, there was general agreement that the Bible was edited in post-Exilic time (latter part of the sixth century B.C.E.) and “reflects the religious crisis of the Diaspora community of that time.” Dever, “Folk Religion.”

³⁸ While working with displaced Somalis in Minnesota it was suggested that the whole community exhibited PTSD symptoms. This framework was useful in finding ways to change behaviors for a group that remains primarily an oral culture—as was so for the exiled Hebrews. To avoid psycho-babble, I use the phrase “traumatic memories” to describe the stories composed by the exiled biblical family. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>

never ended.

Genesis 1-3, then, appeared as a two-part story of a family with collective traumatic memories of enslavement, brutalization, and exile. Here, like Hagar, the Hebrew family listened with the slave's subhuman twice-bodied senses to the *Rib as the captor's story*. It was the story of origin brought back from exile, and it was placed next to the glad story of "let us" so that the bright and dark chapters in the family's history would be forever remembered. Yet, it was not remembrance in a passive sense, rather, it was remembering so that something could be, would be done in the present moment. The stories were there not simply to explain but as a spiritual challenge. The exiled family was challenged to move beyond its glad story memory and beyond its sad story memory by melding them. They were challenged to relive their exiled dark night of the soul and breakthrough to a vision of a grander family story.

These two stories of origin were necessary for the Hebrew family to cope with its traumatic experiences and memories. It seemed clear to me that these stories were therapeutic, that they were honored by the early Hebrews as stories that could lead to the healing of memories. Heard and interpreted as a melded story, a grander family vision of origin would emerge that would enable the family to break the cycle of violence and revenge that they knew only too well as twice-bodied slaves.

In sum, the storyteller of Gen. 1-3 was a family conflicted about its origins, both consciously and subconsciously. The family needed the two creation stories to express the range and depth of its traumatic experiences. The Rib was their captor's glad story.

Mythic families and Divine Couples: brooding the Dark Vapors

To find that emergent grander family story, I had to start with the Rib since it stirred my captor-captive twice-bodied senses in a most passionate way.

As a twice-bodied slave, the stark loneliness of the Garden startled me. It had an unsettling air of familiarity. The Rib account had me visualizing Adam locked down in solitary, in a particularly nasty black Hole, jerkily pacing back and forth, moaning a soliloquy of a convict serving hard time.

Adam was a lone male,³⁹ alone with his lone male god. This was like the single-parent home situation of many inmate sad stories. Since most inmates came from marginal economic conditions, the single-parent (most often a mother)—or even if there were two parents, all—worked multiple jobs. “Absent parents” was a common motif in inmate stories. Others were “State raised convicts,” meaning in truth that they were parentless, brought up in a series of broken-homes or foster homes—“parented” institutionally. *Alone and lonely*—prison had taken me there.

A bit more significantly, the Garden also mirrored the single-sex landscape of prison. Alone and lonely *males*: the literal, symbolic and mystical insights this opened shocked me. I slapped myself upside my head, “No. That can’t be!” It was becoming obvious: They—Adam and his god— are *visibly alone, so they must be invisibly a family*. They are *males alone*, so the *women must be invisible*. Visually, only one parent was present, the stern *Father god*—but mustn’t there be a *Mother goddess*? She must be “invisible”—not seen, hidden, but where?

I considered that most origin myths have male-female creating creatures—a Divine Couple, whether animal or spiritual. Was the Hebrew mythic Rib account an exception? Did this exception define the biblical tradition’s singularity and distinctiveness? Was it unique? Or was the Rib a story of misdirection? Even, possibly, a bold-faced lie?

Here, Chapter 1 reminded the Hebrews that their glad story was polytheistic and that the

³⁹ Lone male describes Adam’s uniqueness, namely, a male created, not born from a sacred coupling.

visual monotheism of the Rib was a lie—the cruelest of lies, the lie of the captor. The Rib said, “You have no Mother! You are subhumans! Destined to be slaves, forever.”

Chapter 1’s “let us” proved useful as an interpretive foil to the Rib’s misdirection. The presence of many gods/goddesses was indicated by “us,” and if the Rib and “let us” were to be melded, the spiritual challenge was to find the Mother in the Rib account.

In many mythic stories, the goddess was often described using water symbology.⁴⁰ Gen. 1:2 in the *King James* read, “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

The Living Bible’s translation of this passage proved quite insightful.⁴¹ It read, “The earth was a shapeless, chaotic mass, with the Spirit of God brooding over the dark vapors.” The King James words: form, void and darkness, evoked little emotion compared to the Living Bible’s shapeless, chaotic, brooding, and dark vapors. *Brooding*: an emotional, intense, heartfelt presence. Where? In *water, the dark vapors*, behind a veil, in a shady part of the Garden. *Aha!*

The Garden Her, the biblical Mother Goddess, was present in Her shapeless, chaotic, brooding self. Although not graphically visible in the account, She was present as She hid in the dark vapors—in the vapory mist, off to the side or behind the scene. She was present as She brooded: a hen upon her eggs. She who was co-creator and fully present during the Garden

⁴⁰ Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). “When Apsu primeval, their begetter, Mummu, and Tiamat, she who gave birth to them all, Still mingled their waters together.” Tablet 1: 3-5 on p.18. “Apsu was the primeval sweet-water ocean, and Tiamat the salt-water ocean, while Mummu probably represented the mist rising from the two bodies of water and hovering over them ...” 3.

⁴¹ Kenneth N. Taylor, *The Living Bible, Paraphrased* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971). In notes to *Genesis* 1:2, “The earth was, or ‘The earth became ...’ a shapeless, chaotic mass or shapeless and void.” And, “Over the dark vapors, or over the cloud of darkness, or over the darkness and water or even over the dark gaseous matter.” Also, Interlinear Scripture Analyzer or “ISA” copyright © 2002-2007 André de Mol. <http://www.scripture4all.org> (Katwijk aan Zee, The Netherlands), 2007 Cites *Strong’s Concordance*’s translation options of “to brood; by implication, to be relaxed: flutter, move, shake.”

events.

The lone male's Mother goddess

There She was. The lone male's Mother goddess, hiding in the Garden's shade, "brooding over the dark vapors."

I have to admit that this insight came with much emotional resistance. As it took me a decade to name She who was in prison's shade, despite what might be expected, I did not want to re-enter my own sad story through this biblical story. I had thought that my sad story would enable me to understand the biblical stories in a way that justified my exiting the biblical tradition. Instead, my prison Mother was revealing that She, Herself, was there in "let us," and that another Mother was brooding in the dark vapors. I was not to leave the Garden. This lone male Mother goddess was presenting Herself much like prison's Mother. Each presented the Dark Mother,⁴² though it made more sense to describe the Garden's "brooding vapors" Her as Shade Mother.⁴³ The image of "Shade Mother" afforded a richer exploration and presentation of Her multiple, varied and perplexing manifestations and presences.

Both prison and the Garden set before me the obvious fact to which my traditional theological education had blinded me, that is, to the necessary and universal principle of a male and female presence in a story of origin. If there was a father god there *must be* a mother goddess somewhere. If there was an Adam, in time the invisible Eve *must appear*—even if in such a wildly imagined way as from the male's Rib.⁴⁴

⁴² The mythic tradition of the "Dark Mother" has been revived through the works of Carl Jung and Robert Graves. Today there is widespread recognition of the Crone, Hag, Witch and other shady aspects of the goddess.

⁴³ This "Dark Mother" is more accurately described as the *Shade Mother*. "Shade" conveys the subtle truth and reality that She is there, fully present inside the misty shade of "brooding vapors."

⁴⁴ Bartolo di Fredi's fresco "The Creation of Eve," a 14th century Italian fresco conveys the "wildly imaginative" and

Truly, despite what the biblical Rib origin story wanted to hide, when melded with “let us,” to my twice-bodied heart it revealed the Garden’s Mother goddess. This is the message the exiled Hebrews preserved. The whole Rib account was itself a masterpiece of misdirection about polytheism. As the captor’s story, the Rib tricked everyone into thinking that it was only about the lone male, with the revelation that there was only one god, the monotheistic, patriarchal and angry Father.

In brief, Chapter 1’s “let us” when melded with the Rib story revealed a Divine Couple. In stark contrast to how the Augustinian/Calvinist biblical theological tradition handled the material and interpreted these stories of origin, Gen. 1-3 was a thoroughly polytheistic story. Indeed, the traditional monotheistic interpretation of the Rib account when melded with Chapter 1’s “let us” served to underscore, in negative counterpoint, the polytheism at the root of the biblical narrative. In this light these two chapters when read with twice-bodied sensing unmasked a lie.

The apparent absence of the Shade Mother from Genesis was a visual trick and deception. A creation account (as the mythic story told by parents in a family) must have at least two divinities, male and female. Genesis 1-3, then, was a two-part story of origin with two goddesses, one inferred in Chapter’s 1 “let us” and the other’s presence sensed as She brooded inside the Rib’s dark vapors.

An emerging story of origin

With twice-bodied sensing, when I evaluated the Rib and “let us” as visiting room stories, it seemed reasonable to infer that somehow the two were to explain, inspire and *together enable the listener to hear an emerging story of origin and discern its spiritual message*. Each was a part of a

sad story aspect of the Rib story. See picture p. _____.

grander family story that would emerge from hearing the melded stories. Each story (one glad, one sad) was to stand on its own and its distinctiveness understood through scholarly work, then the two were to be held in creative tension. In time, a story did emerge, that of the Mother Goddess of the Garden. I was absolutely thunderstruck.

If what I was discerning was true, it turned everything I had previously learned as a theologian upside down. The biblical tradition was polytheistic, not monotheistic. The Rib was the exiled Hebrews captor's story—a mythically sad story. The origin stories abounded with the presences of Mother goddesses—Genesis was not a lone male Father god's story.

The challenges that I now faced were several. With twice-bodied sensing, what else would reading the melded stories disclose? What story of origin would emerge from melding the two biblical stories? More significantly, Was there a way to enable others to experience twice-bodiedness and so discern the presence of the biblical Mother Goddess?

Where would She—in Her many manifestations and presences—lead me?

Bibliography

- Abbott, Walter. M., S.J., editor. *The Documents of Vatican II*. New York: America Press, 1966.
- Abraham, Joseph. "Feminist Hermeneutics and Pentecostal Spirituality: the Creation Narrative of Genesis as Paradigm." *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, (2003, 6:1): 3-21.
- St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 84), trans. R. J. Teske, S.J., D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991.
- _____, *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis* (The Works of St. Augustine. Vol. 13), trans. E. Hill, O.P., New York: New City Press, 2002.
- Boer, Roland. "The Fantasy of Genesis 1-3." *Biblical Interpretation*. (2006: 14,4): 309-331.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=21466808&site=ehost-live> (accessed June 13, 2008)
- Boff, Leonardo and Clodovis. *Introducing Liberation Theology*. New York: Orbis Books, 1987.
- Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973 and 1985.
- _____, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978 and 1990.
- De Mol, Andre. *Interlinear Scripture Analyzer*, copyright © 2002-2007 <http://www.scripture4all.org>
Katwijk aan Zee, The Netherlands, 2007.
- Dever, William G. "Folk Religion in Early Israel: Did Yahweh have a Consort?" In *Aspects of Monotheism*, 1996. Edited by Hershel Shanks and Jack Meinhardt (Biblical Archaeological Society) N.P.
<http://www.basarchive.org/bswbBrowse.asp?PubID=BSBKAM&Volume=0&Issue=0&ArticleID=3&UserID=2238> (accessed 6/9/2008)
- di Fredi, Bartolo. "Creation of Eve," 1356-67 <https://www.1st-art-gallery.com/Manfredi-De-Battilor-Bartolo-Di-Fredi-Fredi/The-Creation-Of-Eve-1356-67.html>
- Edwards, Jonathan. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741). In *Jonathan Edwards, Basic Writing*. New York: The New American Library, 1966.
- _____, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, ed. Harry S. Stout, Vol. 22 in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, vols. 1-26, Yale Univ. Press, 1957-2008.
- Gimbutas, Marija. *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*. University of California Press, 1974.
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. *In Memory of Her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1985.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Goddesses: Biblical Echoes." In *Feminist Approaches to the Bible*, 1995. Edited by Hershel Shanks. Online: N.P.
<http://www.basarchive.org/bswbBrowse.asp?PubID=BSBKFA&Volume=0&Issue=0&ArticleID=3&UserID=2238>
- Heidel, Alexander. *The Babylonian Genesis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Kerr, Hugh T., editor. John Calvin, *A Compend of the Institutes of Religion*. Philadelphia: Westminster

Press, 1964.

Kroncke, Francis X. "The Healing of Vietnam," *Voices: the art and science of psychotherapy* (Journal of the American Academy of Psychotherapists) Spring/Summer 1991, Vol.27, no. 1& 2, p. 149-155.

_____. "Outlaw or American Patriot?" No pages. Cited June, 2008. <http://www.minnesota8.net/kroncke-writings.html>

_____. *Patriotism Means Resistance*, 1972 trial memoir MS. No pages. Cited June, 2008. Online: <http://mnhs.mnpals.net> (search "Author" enter "Kroncke F"), *Minnesota Historical Society* and <http://www.minnesota8.net/kroncke-writings.html>

_____. "Prison, Bottoming Out, Mother." *Cross Currents*, XXVIII:1 (Spring 1988): 53-63.

_____. "Resistance as Sacrament." *Cross Currents*, XXI:4 (Fall 1971):369-376.

_____. "The Religious Influence on the Rise of the Penitentiary, 1787-1822." No pages. Cited June, 2008. Online: <http://www.minnesota8.net/kroncke-writings.html>

_____. "Teilhard de Chardin's Personalizing Universe," Honors thesis, St. John's University (Minnesota) library, 1966.

Mollin, Marian. "Communities of Resistance: Women and the Catholic Left of the Late 1960s." *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 31, 2004.

Neihardt, John. G., editor. *Black Elk Speaks: being the life story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*. University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

Neumann, Erich. *The Great Mother: an analysis of the archetype*. Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series, 1972.

Shanks, Hershel, et al., editors. "Defining the Problems: Where we are in debate," *The Rise of Ancient Israel* Resident Associate Program, Smithsonian Institute), 1991. Online. Biblical Archaeology Society. <http://www.basarchive.org/bswbBrowse.asp?PubID=BSBKRA&Volume=0&Issue=0&ArticleID=1&UseRID=2238> (accessed 6/9/2008) N.P

Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess*. San Francisco: Harper, 1979.

Taylor, Kenneth N. *The Living Bible, Paraphrased*. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971.

Trible, Phyllis. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

_____. *God and the rhetoric of sexuality*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).