

Thank you all for coming.

What I would like to do over the next few minutes is describe to you about 5 events, theories or phenomena which I believe are problematic for monotheistic religions, particularly Christianity. It is not my intention to promote one religion over another or debate the merits or demerits of a particular religion or style of worship. Yet, the events of September 11th combined with recent archeological evidence which I will share led me observe a trend that I see emerging as our society becomes more and more “mediated” or as people immerse themselves further into the Mass Communications, the “Media” Arts. I also have to admit that I only chose Christianity because this religion remains the one I am most familiar with, having gone to Catholic Schools, and studied the Bible throughout my life.

I would like to begin by sharing with you a chart I created to provide the framework for some of the terminology and ideas you will be hearing. To the left is the Communication Style of Human Civilization. In order for the theory to work, you do have to accept at least this fundamental correlation. We started as an oral, agricultural species. At this time we worshiped many Gods. This is the era of Paganism, Greek Mythology, Hinduism, Animism, and other earth centered religions. These religions depended on feeling, stories and they were very mutable (always changing). The Primary Event in these religions is generally the dance, or symbolic ceremony. Expansion of the religion took place through tradition, things were handed down “religion of your forefathers.” There is at least part of a tradition of other religions being incorporated. I am not certain, but perhaps how the Romans incorporated Greek Gods, or how the Native Americans incorporated Christianity are examples of what I am talking about here. The emphasis here is clearly on unity with nature or the universe.

As moved to literacy with the invention of the printing press in 1455, which was the first Mass Communication and remained the only one until the introduction of newspapers for wide circulation in the 17th century and magazines in the 18th century. Literacy seemed to play in perfectly with a more sophisticated montheist religion - one God. The Book has been and remains the primary basis along with the prophecies contained within the text as evidence of God’s participation and favoritism. We see particular emphasis on Scholarship, the Intellect and

Reading. There is perhaps no more powerful example than the rise of Islam to which we owe our system of accounting, and tremendous insight into areas of astronomy, biology and the sciences. In most cases the book is interpreted by a single person - a scholar who shares meaning with a meeting or congregation. Other religions tend to be squelched or discredited. Tension does arise between monotheistic religions despite their enormous similarities. Expansion depended on proselytism and conversion, and the book, literacy and its sophistication placed man over nature.

Almost from the inception of the 20th Century and the introduction of radio, earlier photography, motion pictures, recording, and later television, the internet and multimedia, we see an exponential effect take place in terms of society's level of sophistication. I think this allows for the rise of comparative religion, which is especially important as people from all over the world begin to acquire siblings - the clan, race and national identity become suddenly mixed all together as a result of travel, communications and even war. So people are forced to re-examine their relationships in the context of these new people with whom they never had contact or never took very seriously. In the 20th century I think both religions and humans attempted to ground themselves in the notion of fact. There was I believe a move toward finding indisputable evidence. At the same time with the cultural revolution of the 60's at least in America there was a drive toward feeling, this was accompanied toward the latter part of the century with a respect and re-examination of one's authenticity or heritage. People began to make more personal interpretations of religion. I think there was a shift from absolute conformity to the scholar to a more personal question of "how does this make me feel?" In the west I think these factors played into the enormous interest in eastern religions which emerged in the later part of the century. It seemed to me at this time that people either hated, identified with or were ambivalent toward other religions. I feel expansion of religion came largely as a result of alienation, and religions tended to migrate toward 2 distinct camps - the fundamentalist vs. The liberal interpretations.

Finally, as this century progresses I see humans moving more and more toward individual authorship of Mass Communication devices. Media authorship is becoming more accessible to the masses (although you would not know that from my past few years here at Coppin). As a

result I think we are beginning to see a religious “mix” take place. Hybrids formed when for example the Jewish person actively and intensely studies Taoism, or the Buddhist who is a Rasta while in Jamaica or the Muslim who reads Tarot cards or smokes a Peace Pipe. Religions are based on all of the above and I believe that genetic science will emerge as having a critical impact on the nature of religion. My genetic disposition will influence how I see God, and this knowledge of ancestry will force a re-examination of one's destiny in the context of this irrefutable fact. Pieces or parts of each of these individual religions will be put together to form a personal universal truth. With the introduction of virtual environments there will be increasing demand for the “out of body” experience. I think other religions will be analyzed, utilized in part and then rejected in part or in whole. Expansion of these personal interpretations will depend on information, again alienation and existential dilemmas. Increasingly there will be a desire to be a part of nature because no matter what philosophy, ideology, scientific discovery, or explanation is thrown into the mix the fact remains that we are a part of nature and like all things on this planet we are born, consume, copulate and expire. I think in an age of personal authorship there will be a re-alignment and desire to both accept and be conscious of those rituals.

II. Problematic Areas for Monotheism

At this point I would like to look at several of the examples I cited earlier which point to the crisis today and I think illustrate the foundation of my thesis.

I would like to start with what I think is perhaps the most important scientific - spiritual event of the last century. Which was when a man landed on the moon looked around and then turned back around and looked back at earth. What we saw was a fragile planet floating in cold, lifeless, silent, inscrutable, inhospitable space. This event as Joseph Campbell so eloquently put it “showed us that our destiny was not necessarily in the heavens as we had originally been led to believe.” And I will add led to believe by monotheistic religions and their prophets.

Now for purposed of my argument I would say that it was not such a big deal that man went to the moon. That in and of itself does not necessarily threaten monotheism. What became problematic for monotheism and christianity in particular was that it was televised all over the

world, for everyone to see at the same time - and the astronauts brought back all these pictures to prove that they had accomplished the unthinkable.

It is the fact that the whole world participated in this miracle as opposed to the privileged few in Palestine as had done in Jesus' time that makes the event problematic. Anyone can question the facts or reality of Jesus' miracles, but the moon landing was there for everyone to see - irrefutable evidence that a miracle had taken place and it was man who performed it with very little deference to God. It seemed also that the one God did not mind that man went to the moon. Nothing prevented us from going, and in the minds of many I am sure - nothing helped us either. There was the sense that Man did this on his own.

Civilization, society has changed so much in just the past 20 years, let alone 2,000. There is very little if anything to my knowledge written in the texts of the monotheistic religions that speaks of mind altering drugs and their use. Like England at the time of the American Revolution the great religions have refused to incorporate or even listen to the promise and euphoria of this new found "freedom".

As a result, through the use of these devices and the Mass Media people such as Stanley Kubrick, Bob Marley, Fela Anikalup Kuti, Martin Scorsesse, Hunter S. Thompson, and other late 20th century media authors have gone about the work of actively re-defining religion and the existence of God for their audiences. Marley was probably the most insidious because he used their own book against them. This too becomes problematic.

I have included in your packet the article from the BBC in which archeology provides indisputable proof that the walls of Jericho never existed, that there was no exodus from Egypt as we have been led to believe and in fact the Jews have no more right to Palestine than does anyone else in the world. The American Mass Media has chosen to sequester this highly volatile information, but it cannot go on forever.

Again for an archeologist to say he has been digging for 60 years and cannot find any proof, is not a big deal, but for some mass media source to publish this and make it available worldwide on the internet is severely problematic.

Fundamental to monotheistic religions is the concept of good and evil. This ideology along with the presence of an overall leader or source of evil is largely absent from the pagan religions. (Coyote Story).

This becomes problematic and is obviously flawed as we see in our current crisis. Prior to the Mass Media, it would have been so easy to just dismiss the terrorists as “evil” which our government has done. But where they really the evil ones? I believe that in their minds, we the United States of America are the evil ones and they have plenty of evidence to back up their position. This is why I say that the response of both the U.S. Government, the President and this War in Afghanistan are clearly behaviors appropriate for and indicative of 19th century thinking. We are following this fool using an outdated map and the entire landscape has changed.

And notice that fundamentally we are caught in the cross fire between these two monotheistic religions each accusing each other of a concept that the mass media has proven is entirely relative and based on incomplete perceptions and cultural bias.

I like them believe that the United States Government is fundamentally evil, if we are forced to use these two terms. Since I have been on this planet, we have constantly been involved in wars. We are the leading exporter and producer of instruments that have only one purpose – to destroy human life. I have seen them in Vietnam, at War against Russia, in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Columbia, Palestine, Grenada, South Africa, Somalia, Iraq, Panama, Turkey, Laos, and other countries. I have seen the United States Government support people such as Sani Abacha in Nigeria, Idi Amin, Pieter Willem Botha, Raoul Cedras (Haiti), Vinicio Cerezo (Guatemala), Chiang Kai Shek, Roberto Suazo Cordova (Honduras), Ngo Dinh Diem, Francois & Jean Claude Duvalier, Ferdinand Marcos, Mobutu Sese Seko, Manuel Noriega, Osama Bin Laden (who was a CIA operative), Saddam Hussein, Alfredo Cristiani (El Salvador), General Samuel Doe (Liberia), King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz (Saudi Arabia), General Francisco Franco, Hassan II

(Morococ), Maxinmilliano Martinez (El Salvador), General Efrain Rios Montt (Guatemala), Turgut Ozal Prime (Turkey), Mohammed Reza Pahlevi (Iran), General Augusto Pinochet (Chile), General Sitiveni Rabuka (Fiji), Antonio de Oliveira Salza (Portugal) Anastasio Somoza, Jr. and Sr. (Nicaragua), Ian Smith (Rhodesia, General Suharto (Indonesia) Rafael Leonidas Trujullo, General Joge Rafael Videla (Argentina), and the list could go on and on. A virtual parade of dispicable men consistent for their repression of human rights, civil rights, and willingness to comply with U.S. Foreign policy which essentially demands that a climate be created to facilitiate U.S. Corporate profits through “any means necessary.” In the words of Fela Kuti the United States leaves “sorrow, tears and blood, its our regular trademark.”

In fact, the real mythology here which the Mass Media has largely created and is complicit to is that this country **is not** run by its Military Industrial Complex. This complex which as I said exists because of the ability of the mass media to decieve people into believing we are “good” is extremely problematic particularly for Christians. Of all the Prophets of the monotheistic religions, no one is more uncompromising, out spoken and radical than Jesus himself. Who made no apology for, no excuse and left no circumstances to justify the above actions. Jesus may be the most outspoken proponent for peace and justice that ever lived. And it is hard for me to imagine how under the paradigm he described, any of us could be so decieved as to believe we are going to heaven given our participation and active support of these atrocities and people through out tax money and association as Americans.

You know before Sept. 11, where I lived, I would see at least 3 confederate flags a day. Now I think have seen 3 in the 6 months since Sept. 11. Now, all I see are American Flags, at least 8 per day. To me, it is almost the same thing, the two flags are almost indistinguishable from each other. One wants to make me a slave on earth, the other a slave in the afterlife.

Conclusions

I think in many ways the Mass Media are the new mythology. Perhaps you could say that Film is Zeus, Radio is Neptune, and the internet is like Aphrodite - I really don't know. But I do feel comfortable in saying that these media along with science are moving us toward a re-examination of monotheism and age of increased pagan activity. I think that much at this point is obvious.

<i>Communication Style of Humans</i>	<i>Characteristics In terms of number of Gods</i>	<i>Basis for religion</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Primary Event</i>	<i>Treatment of other Religions</i>	<i>Relationship to Nature</i>
<i>Oral</i>	Multi – Many	Feeling Story	Agricultural, unity w/ nature	Dance, Ceremony	Incorporated	Unity
<i>Literate</i>	Mono – One	Book	Scholarship, intellect, reading	Meeting, Religion Interpreted	Squelched	Man over nature.
<i>Mass Communication</i>	Comparative	Fact Feeling Heritage	More personal interpretation	Experience of being	Contempt, admiration ambivalent	Polarization Fund. vs. Liberal
<i>Individual Authorship of Mass Communication</i>	Religious “Mix”	Above + genetic	Pieces combined to create universal truth	Creating emotional “out of body” exp.	Analysis, utilization or rejection.	Desire to be part of nature.