

Introduction

“The black’s history of rope, fire, torture, castration, infanticide, rape; death and humiliation; fear by day and night, fear as deep as the marrow of the bone, doubt that he was worthy of life, since everyone around him denied it; sorrow for his women, for his kinfolk, for his children, who needed his protection, and whom he could not protect; rage, hatred and murder, hatred for white men so deep that it often turned against him and his own, and made all love, all trust, all joy impossible.” James Baldwin

Let’s see if these words can’t be applied to other peoples unnecessarily suffering today and who become their worst enemies.

Good morning. You are listening to Religion Roundtable, which is quickly getting the reputation as the most controversial show on radio.

Our guest today will be anthropologist Dr. Hank Wesselman.

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God Without Religion is a multi-award winning book that institutional religious powers hope you never read. Here is one reason:

12 My Comments/News

Last week I described the State of Israel in terms that would have had Zionist Semites yelling he’s an anti-Semite. Of course, that’s like saying that Americans who are critical of American foreign policy are anti-American.

Anyone who knows my work knows I am not anti-Semitic. I can’t be, because to me Semites do not even exist, contrary to the opinions of self-proclaimed Semites. Those so-called Semites are only human beings, drunk on delusional self-mystification. As I’ve said in the past, I am against Semitism and against anti-Semitism. Because the only

way to get rid of anti-Semitism is to uproot the divisive Dark Age concept of Semitism from the minds of human beings, who seemingly never fail to bestow their dangerous self-delusional ideas of themselves onto their children.

I was one of those children. So I know both first hand and from studying the Hebrew Bible that the idea of Semitism is rooted in racism, a cultural superiority complex, and ultimately divisiveness.

Why is it you can supposedly apostatize from every religion except Judaism? Why, when you convert to Judaism, is there even mention of becoming a blood child of Abraham? I can say I don't believe in the nonsense of the Bible until I am blue, and yet self-proclaimed Semites will continue to presume to tell me that I am still Jewish. Obviously, to them it is not just a religion. At the same time, Jews will call Judaism a religion, and sometimes even a culture, but not a race.

To give context, Hitler called it a race. It isn't, but it's treated as one, to the misfortune of babies indoctrinated in the puny Semitic identity.

And sadly, the Dark Age Roman world lapped up that puny image of the self that the defeated Hebrews infected themselves with, which may be why today the biggest terrorist states in the world are the USA and Israel, the Christian state and the Jewish state.

They'll say being Jewish has to do with a special part of your soul, and of course that is self-mystification. But then they will say that you're Jewish if your mother was Jewish, but not your father.

Huh?? Excuse me? Well, so much for the soul mumbo jumbo. The only reason they decided on that protocol was because back in the day you could usually be sure of your mother, but you couldn't always be sure of the father. Doesn't sound like a soul issue to me; sounds more like a matter of practicality, which is why Jews come in all different shapes and sizes.

My family didn't have to worry about that practicality so much. My family was in Baghdad for 2600 years, part of a Hebrew tribe exiled to Babylon.

Incidentally, it was after that Babylonian conquest that the Hebrew tradition went downhill. Monotheism began forming, Judaism developed, ignorant Rabbis eventually gained power, the ascetic and mystical tradition credited to the Hebrews died out, Satan was invented or should I say adopted, resurrection became a dogma, and self-delusional Semitism, which to me is no more or less than pride of pedigree, became far more prominent.

So if anyone is genetically Semitic, it's me. As if any of that matters! Don't worry! I'm not so delusional, because if you look far back enough, we are all mutts. Purity of race does not exist. We are all "energetic mongrels."

But if you're Jewish and you look only as far back as the myths you hold dear, like the myth of Noah and his three sons, Shem, Cham, and Yaphet, then you'll end up praising the racial sons of Shem, the Semites beloved by God and Noah, meaning yourself, and affirming Noah's curse of servitude on the children of Cham: Canaanites, the Blacks, the Egyptians. And you'll affirm that a certain strip of real estate was promised to you by your god. This is racism.

This tripe should be transparent to anyone that has a working brain in the 21st century! Everyone in the world making up gods that promise them a portion or the entire world is a recipe for never ending war.

Reminds me of what Robert Frost once said about racists: "The Ku Klux Klan. They wear white sheets and their hats have a point – which is more than can be said for their beliefs." Oh, he knew there was a point to their ideas, but it's just a very divisive and stupid one.

If a black man in this country had to have a different colored license plate, would that be racism? So why isn't it racism when a Palestinian has a different colored license plate in Israel? Why isn't segregated roads racism in Israel? Aren't people judged on their individual merits in a free society? And since when is occupation legal for USA and Israel and illegal for everyone else in the international community?

Palestinians often get beat up by Israeli settlers. What do we do here if a gay or black is beaten? Settlers have urinated in Palestinian water sources and have even swum in them with their animals. Are we

getting the picture here?

Israeli Settlers take barley seeds and soak them in poison; they disperse the seeds throughout the Palestinian farmland as a means of killing the sheep of Palestinians.

Over half of the most fertile land and water resources in the region are being annexed by Israel.

This is thievery, apartheid, racism, and hegemony. I lived in Israel; I heard the racism, especially from the mouths of the ultra-orthodox, surprise, surprise. I'm an Israeli citizen, in fact.

But how can an Israeli ever say this land is ours because a moldy book written by partisans says their God promised this land to us, when other people were living on it at the time, and when other peoples other than you were always living on it while you were there? The Americas belong to the Native Indians far more than does Israel belong to Zionists. Are we giving them back their land?

Of course, the biggest reason for the State of Israel's existence is that the holocaust would not have happened had there been Israel. But the holocaust was not the last time we had ethnic cleansing. And disempowerment and murder and suffering come in forms that may not be so dramatic, but take their toll over the centuries nevertheless. The solution is not having Jewish state and a woman's state and a gay state and a Muslim state, in fact, the eventual solution may be closer to having no states, but in the mean time the solution is for human beings to let go of divisive belief systems of the past and to start, if I may be so brazen to suggest, identifying with each other!

Now, I'm willing to face realities, that those Israelis are there to stay, but perhaps the Israelis can face a few realities. First, they have no divine right to the land. They are there because of political maneuvering. Second, the Palestinians are there to stay too. Third, they as a people are as valuable to the world as any other people. Fourth, racism and pro-Semitic tendencies that result in anti-humanitarian attitudes are no less disgusting than the anti-Semitic tendencies of Europe.

Of course, the biggest groups that are heir to this ancient Semitic fraud of an identity are the Christians and Muslims. You'll never hear a group of people talk about peace more and go to war more. If you're into lip service, you'll love these two sects.

I talk about self-knowledge in GWR, and I get E-mails from fundamentalists who tell me that I must be worshipping my self.

Au contraire. Service to the expansive self, the larger self, is a world apart from reveling in the narrow self. And it is Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, the three monotheistic religions, which overwhelmingly glorify the little, sniveling, pathetic self in human beings and ignore the larger self of humanity.

Christianity, not even Islam, may be the most belligerence-producing religion in the world PRECISELY BECAUSE its so-called holy books largely offer a god that is none other than the very confined community of worshippers. The minute the mythic Jesus tries to undermine that narrow God in once sentence, likely ripped from Greek philosophers without any due credit given, the fear and superstition burdened Paul, or whoever THEY were that wrote in his name, bolsters the narrow tribal deity.

No wonder that as a centralized religion, Christianity obliterates expansive self-knowledge. In the extreme it dishes up self-love and caters to centralized power that then divides the human race and feeds the intellectual and emotional weakling in us. It rejects reason, places itself above scrutiny and penetrating questions with one word, faith, and then commands the little ego to go out and convince everyone in the world that it is absolutely right, but never has to prove or show any evidence that it is right. How convenient! We hear of the trials of spreading the Gospel, but how about the much harder test of challenging yourself and your narrow identity?

Christianity creates societies with economic inequity: it teaches the oppressed that envy is the devil, we are all sinners. Hierarchy, not equality, is God's will. Instead of social justice, it promotes up down systems that give divine right to rulers (even a President!) who exploit the masses. Masses deluded by Christianity are promised an eternal heaven as the reward for their lifelong ignorance and servitude.

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Dr. Hank Wesselman has spent his life working among traditional tribal peoples. For the past 3 decades, he has been exploring eastern Africa's Great Rift Valley in search of answers to the mystery of human origins. He is the author of several books, including Spiritwalker, Medicinemaker, and Visionseeker.

You are both a spiritual seeker and a scientist; both anthropologist and shaman. By way of introduction to your world and work, I'd like to read a quote of yours. You write "it is time to create a 'new story', a new cultural myth, in which we synthesize a whole new set of ways of seeing ourselves and our society, as well as our place in the greater scheme of things."

What do you feel is this story or myth?

You write, "No one today can deny that the world's social, political, economic, and religious problems are reaching critical mass."

Talk to us about this spiritual awakening that you are observing in the West and how you feel it can address the challenges we are facing. For example, how is this spiritual awakening going to combat voter fraud?

In Spiritwalker you say you found a piece in the puzzle of human evolution, and you feel the experiences you share in the book contain a socially urgent message for us. What is that piece and what is that message?

You also write about progressives: "The ever-increasing numbers of [creative and progressive individuals] know with absolute certainty that if we continue to do business as usual, Western Civilization may

well collapse, taking the rest of the world with it. This awareness is producing a growing sense of urgency, an existential angst, accompanied by an insistence on social, political, and economic reform that will benefit everyone, not just the powerful and the privileged.”

In your mind, what does collapse look like and what does reform look like? Are we in need of a revolution, and if so, how does one look?

You list some of the values of modern mystics:

1. They hold a strong concern for social justice and the quality of life at all levels of society, both nationally and internationally.
2. Social tolerance, individualism, and spiritual freedom are highly valued ideals.
3. Strong support is felt for women's issues as well as the safety and well-being of children and the elderly.
4. They are environmentally savvy. Accordingly, the value of simple, natural living is seen as a high ideal.
5. They tend to hold strong feelings of disaffection for Western allopathic medicine.
6. They have strong interests in alternative and preventative healthcare modalities (holistic, shamanic, transpersonal, herbalist, acupuncture, ayurvedic, and meditative).

Of course, these are the views of millions of people all over the world, most of whom are obviously not living any particular mystical lifestyle. So are you saying that mysticism seeds these ideas, and they wouldn't be here without it, or is it that these ideas often lead one to interest in mysticism? Or something else entirely?

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What is Shamanism?

Did modern Shamans get the ancient Shamanic traditions right? Was there any dehumanization on the part of researchers? We certainly got so many other mystical practices and philosophies wrong.

I think a general understanding of it, and you can comment on it:

It is a method to develop our spiritual healing abilities. Shamans are a type of medicine man or woman who uses journeys to hidden worlds to solve problems.

It is a method to diagnose and cure human ills and, some believe, to cause suffering.

It is a method to control the weather, interpreting dreams, and traveling to upper and lower worlds, and divining useful information.

It seems like a subject, like all spiritual subcategories that is so vulnerable to superstition and loads of cultural baggage. How do our listeners differentiate between actual healing wisdom of past generations and superstition?

If it is a method to gain spirit assistance in healing, hunting or weather management, then...

Well, these things are important part of survival, but they sound more materialistic than mystical. Is the Shaman both, sort of a Jack of All trades for the tribe? Or is the word Shaman nearly useless because it is such a grab-bag term?

Would you call the Buddha a Shaman?

Shamanistic practices involve pagan methods and beliefs that are forbidden in the Bible.

Catholicism marginalized pagan and Shamanic traditions, in a power grab. The Catholic Church largely caused the collapse of the Greek and Roman religions, destroying temples and forbidding ceremonies.

Our own continent later saw remnants of that hostility in Salem witch trials. Perhaps even modern political campaigns against the use of certain herbs are vestiges of religious campaigns against shamanism originating with the Catholic Church of Rome.

Spanish colonization also destroyed Shamanic traditions. Catholic priests destroyed local traditions, denouncing practitioners as "devil worshippers" and executing them.

Shamanic practitioners have been attacked by Christian missionaries to third world countries and by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

As recently as thirty years ago, historic petroglyphs were being defaced by missionaries in the Amazon.

A similarly tale can be told of the encounter between Buddhists proselytizers and shamans, such as in Mongolia.

This story is about power, not about what technology was more effective: Belief or Shamanic methods.

How do you see organized religion in the past, how do you assess its crimes of destroying culture and science, and how has organized religion impacted your work in the present?

Shamans were clearly the threat to centralized power. In Shamanic cultures, the shaman played a priest-like role, but Joseph Campbell pointed out the difference. He said that the "The priest is the socially initiated, ceremonially inducted member of a recognized religious organization, where he holds a certain rank and functions as the tenant of an office that was held by others before him, while the

shaman is one who, as a consequence of a personal psychological crisis, has gained a certain power of his own."

Now, this clearly speaks to the issue of centralized power, which is always a substitute for personal power.

Any hint of centralized power in Shamans? After all, some Shamans use a perceived position of authority to heal others. Or do Shamans freely teach others how to heal themselves?

Is Shamanism another ism like religious isms with which people and practitioners can narrowly identify? What about Shamanic practitioners frees them such limitations?

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Shamanic initiation – how does it work? How is illness or crisis involved? Is Shamanism something inherited or is it a calling, like being a nurse?

In Spirit Medicine, you describe the methods of how to

- understand the classic causes of illness
- work with the four levels of spiritual healing;

What are the classic causes and what are these four levels of healing?

It is a common perception that possession by one or more spirits for empowerment, personal health, and healing abilities is necessary. How does this connect with our spirit animal?

How are dance, song, drumming, and percussions used in Shamanic healing and journeywork?

How are herbs used?

How do Shamans use suggestion and catharsis in their healing?

How about totems?

Why is Shamanic healing often called symbolic healing, and is not the Shaman healed in healing others?

If a Shaman creates a fictional story around someone's malady, one that the Shaman knows will be received by the patient, how does that fictional symbolism foster healing? Talk about paradox and even purposefully deceiving the patient.

Can you talk a bit about Shamans and community development, and maintaining social harmony?

In The Journey to the Sacred Garden you talk about finding our Garden. And that our garden operates by four primary rules:

- Everything in the garden is symbolic of some aspect of ourselves or our life experience.
- Everything in the garden can be communicated with, enhancing understanding.
- The garden can be changed by doing gardening.
- When you change your garden, some part of you or your life will change in response.

Interestingly, I felt a child that these things could be said about my room. Can the same things be said about someone private room or study, namely that everything in it is symbolic of some aspect of our lives, the objects in our room have sentience, we can rearrange our room and so subtly change our lives?

Closing

Thank Guest

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Events on the horizon: From July 22nd to the 28th, I'll be leading a retreat at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, NY on Seeking God Without Religion. For more information, you can call (800) 944-1001, or write to registration@eomega.org. Visit www.eomega.org.

Also, go to www.godwithoureligion.com for information on the book God Without Religion, read an excerpt or the Foreword by Arun Gandhi, or listen to other radio interviews, get information on other God Without Religion retreats.