

### **The Domination system.**

#### **Echoes of redemptive violence are seen in the psalms**

*Ps.58:1-2, Do you indeed decree what is right you gods? Do you judge people fairly? No, in your hearts you devise wrongs; your hands deal out violence on earth,*

*Ps. 58:10-11, The righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done, they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked. People will say , Surely there is a reward for the righteous: surely there is a God who judges on earth.*

*Ps. 149: 6-9 let the high praises of God be in their throats and a two edged sword in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgement decreed.*

The origin of the Domination system comes from the myth of redemptive violence. In this myth, war, conquest, plunder, rape and enslavement are all ordained in the very Constitution of the universe.

The myth states that the universe is created from the Corpse of a murdered Goddess. Civilisation is a condition of periodic and perpetual Warfare. Peace is the achievement of warfare, and prosperity is the fruit of warfare successfully accomplished.

The Question is, If human beings are created from the blood of a slaughtered god, how can anyone expect people to be anything but violent?

### **The rise of the Domination system.**

What is the Domination System?

The Greek words Kosmos meaning world, aion meaning age and sarx meaning flesh have generally been translated as 'world' in the scriptures.

In ancient Greece they had various meanings according to context. Kosmos means variously, world - universe, Creation, humanity, the planet Earth, the Theatre of History. These conventional usages of Kosmos are roughly similar in Greek and English but alongside them, there is in the New Testament, another usage, that is quite unique in that period. It refers to the human, sociological realm that exists in estrangement from God, or the dominant system.

The Domination system generally teaches us to value power. In any particular Society. However, power is given specific shape by the peculiar conditions of the time. People in every age have coveted wealth. But few societies have praised the entrepreneur as our modern society does. Profit is now the highest social good, consumerism has become the only universally available mode or participation in modern society. The work ethic has been replaced by consumption. The cathedral now is the skyscraper. The hero the billionaire, the Saint, the executive. The Ideology of Religion now the kingdom of Mammon.

*1Cor. 1:26-28 replace the word 'World' with System to see the difference it makes.*

## 2 Engaging the Powers part 2 - The Domination System

It is difficult to date the rise of systemic domination and its legitimization. But by the time of the massive city-states of Sumer and Babylon around 3000 BC. Autocracy,(a system of government by one person with absolute power), was already the accepted order of things, warfare flourished, soldiers in standing armies fought with new bronze weapons. The social system had become rigidly hierarchical or authoritarian based on Masculine supremacy.

Some of these warrior people worshipped their weapons others revered divinities of War who's will decreed the Massacre of male victims and the sexual subjugation of their female victims. Women were beginning to be deprived of the right both to speak their minds and to control their bodies. Though this repression fluctuated widely at different times and places. The earliest known law code against women, was in 2300 BC Urukagina edict. *'that women of former days used to take two husbands, but the women of today, if they are Tempters are stoned with Stones upon which is inscribed the evil intent. If a woman speaks disrespectfully to a man that woman's mouth is crushed with a firebrick.'*

Every class had two tiers, Men and a lower one in the same class for women. Power Lost by men through submission to a ruling elite was compensated by power gained over women, children, workers, slaves and the land.

Human destiny was being driven in a direction that people did not intend and most would not have consciously chosen. The new capacity for expansion and enrichment through conquest created a situation of Anarchy and a struggle for dominance.

A great deal of effort was developed and devoted to formulating laws that would limit violence and secure justice for the weak, but always in a context that preserved advantage for the strong. See *Ex. 20 the 10 Commandments.*

Women found ways to assert power, or to get around existing conventions. Occasionally a woman would achieve genuine power by becoming a queen, or as mother of a king.

China had developed a strong opposition to war. It developed no tradition of the Holy War and war itself was sharply criticized. It had no emphasis on competitive values or Sports. Yet China endured almost 3 millennia of virtual uninterrupted Warfare.

### **Is violence our natural state, can it change, is there an alternative to the Domination system?**

Students of animal nature, such as Konrad Lorenz, Niko Tinbergen, Robert Ardrey and Desmond Morris, have argued that violence, domination and hierarchical ranking do not originate with Homo sapiens they are already observable in some species of birds insects and primates. So if survival of the fittest and violence is that deep in our bones, is there any hope or for peace? Is the human species simply a maladapted mutant destined for self extinction?

The comparison drawn from animal behaviour led to a popularized belief that Human beings inherited the need for aggression. And that there is an aggressive Instinct in humans, that requires constant discharge or release.

### 3 Engaging the Powers part 2 - The Domination System

But modern psychology says acting out of aggression has to be learnt, it is not an Instinct, we are not pre-wired for aggression.

Human beings, however, are potentially aggressive and aggression as a natural indispensable element in human life. (Flight or Fight), People are not inherently Warriors, otherwise the existence of peaceful people would be inexplicable. Nor is there any human need to discharge aggression periodically through Warfare.

According to many military generals, aggression is not necessarily a desirable ingredient in Battle, it clouds judgement and can lead to a rush or inappropriate action. Especially today when a bomber pilot flies tens of thousands of feet above their target or a Naval ship fires shells into an indistinct landmass 15 miles away, or two officers firing a nuclear missile at a city on the other side of the world. Aggression is not a key motivation at all in battle.

Violence is not in fact a constant in human societies. There are primitive peoples surviving even today among whom violence is almost non-existent. In the Philippines, Africa, New Guinea and Malaysia there are tribes that are still pre literate, relatively lacking in gender-role specialisation non-hierarchical and remarkably free of violence. They do not deal with conflict by scapegoating or sacrifice, but by early socialization into cooperation and non-violence.

They have no domination hierarchies, their leaders emerge naturally through age, Wisdom and strength. Sometimes the leader is a woman. Leaders have no power to impose their will on anyone, disputes are settled only by reasoning. An aggrieved or offending party may decide to leave the camp for another, but there is no punishment, not even Exile. Each evening the whole camp plans its moves or activities for the next day. Children's games are non competitive and non-aggressive. Small children are not punished but simply diverted or ignored, aggression towards others is discouraged. Children are taught not to be possessive by the general devaluing or private property. If a person is angry they will sit in a Shelter and speak loudly of what is bothering them without addressing anyone in particular.

The theory of the scapegoat mechanism. A person projects one's own inner violence onto others.

Definition. **Scapegoat theory** refers to the tendency to blame someone else for one's own problems, a process that often results in feelings of prejudice toward the person or group that one is blaming. **Scapegoating** serves as an opportunity to explain failure or misdeeds, while maintaining one's positive self-image

#### A time before the Domination system

Some archaeological remains from neolithic cultures tend to confirm the picture provided by surviving primitive societies. More strikingly there is very little evidence of warfare between 9000 and 4000 BC and not a great deal until around 3000 BC after which it proliferates dramatically. Even in Mesopotamia, the region that would later spawn the myth of redemptive violence, there are no indications of overt hostility between groups in that early period, even after the population density increased and agriculture and animal domestication were invented.

#### 4 Engaging the Powers part 2 - The Domination System

Stone tools were used at first for scraping vegetable matter or the hunt. They were fashioned for Warfare much later. The earliest Sumer people apparently practised a form of democracy. As far as we can judge the fourth Millennium and the ages before it had been moderately peaceful. Battles and raids were not unknown, but they were not constant and did not dominate existence. Such domination as existed was not systemic.

We now know from carbon dating techniques and dendrochronology, that the domestication of wild plants and animals goes back as far as 8000 to 9000 BC. Civilizations, communities that were more than extended families, began about 4000 to 5000 years before the first evidence of War. What is more startling is what archaeologists have found missing. Some cities existed for hundreds of years undisturbed. Equally astonishing is that there is no evidence in neolithic paintings of noble warriors, heroic Conquerors, captives or slaves. Nor are there any indications of thrusting weapons battle axes or swords. However, some mace-heads have been found.

Egypt flourished without a standing army for the first 1500 years in its history. In short the evidence suggests that at least some early societies were basically egalitarian. For the purpose of this study it is not necessary to establish that all neolithic societies were peaceful they clearly were not, but only that some were peaceful.

Many of these early societies appear to be Matrilineal, with descent through the mother and matrilocal, where the husband comes to live with the wife. A situation reflected in Genesis 2: 24. But they were not ruled by women, and so far as we know, patriarchy existed as well as a kind of partnership. Anyway, no doubt men feared that women liberated from patriarchy would revenge themselves by treating men the way men have treated women. But the archaeological evidence and the sexual equality evidence in contemporary primitive groups indicates rather, that at least in some prehistoric societies, a partnership Society existed, characterized *not by power over but by power with*, by cooperation more than competition and by mutual protection. Hierarchies where leaders serve the community rather than Domination hierarchies where Communities must serve the leader. Matt. 20:20-28.

In a society in which a surplus of food is non-existent or only temporary, people in such societies live out of necessity, and tend to be relatively equal at least with respect to the distribution of goods and services. in such societies rule must be by Persuasion, one strong person is no match for three others, so as a result democratic Council seem to have been virtually universal in primitive societies.

Some experts on the Neolithic period would no doubt reject elements of the above reconstruction as fanciful. But there may be a kind of genetic fallacy involved in the idea that our efforts to transform the present world system, depends on there having once been a Golden Age, in which current evils were non-existent. One could even turn the genetic argument on its head and say that since the conditions that made egalitarianism societies once possible, have everywhere disappeared with the ascendancy of the Domination system and increased density of population, egalitarian societies are no longer possible.

## 5 Engaging the Powers part 2 - The Domination System

The moral and theological case against the Domination system is solid, without an appeal to origins such as as original sin in the Garden of Eden.

We need to visualise what a domination free Society would be like whether a truly egalitarian Society ever existed or not it should exist.

Such a society is one to which all humanity should aspire, whether or not it has ever existed before. It would indeed strengthen hope and give it empirical grounding if such a dream was once a reality. But we need not argue that something has to have existed in the past to be a real possibility for the future, it is not the origins but the eschatology, end times, that people find appealing in such a hope.

Indeed some such story of a Golden Age seems to be preserved in the Folk memory of hundreds of societies. Some Western anthropologists have generally dismissed these tales as lacking any basis in fact. After all western civilization is the Apex of evolutionary progress. So how could primitives have achieved what has eluded us.

The Yahwist creation accounts Gen. 2. and the creation of male first and creation of female from the male, depict a society in which the women took initiative in making decisions. The woman is the product of a special creative act in the Yahwist version filling a gap in creation and a need in the male, without which the original creation would have been incomplete. The first couple are depicted as agricultural not Hunters or herders, and women always play a more central role in agricultural societies.

The Fall was the loss of female freedom and submission to males. Genesis 1, by contrast is explicitly egalitarian. the image of God is male and female, and the first couple are created together as a reflection of the Divine nature.

From the earliest times it seems, male supremacy is uncritically assumed to be the normal way of life as is white supremacy and rules by an elite.

The very idea of Supremacy as the prerogative of a few, is challenged by our new account of prehistory. It is possible that broad sectors of humanity once existed in Greater Tranquillity together than ours today. So if the Domination system is a relatively late social invention that only achieved hegemony 5000 years ago, perhaps it is not Unthinkable to try and change the system.

No one person or group of people imposed the Domination system on us. it came wholly unbidden. People inadvertently stumbled into a struggle for power beyond their ability to avoid it, or to stop it. This struggle generated a selective process beyond human control. Which moulded change inevitably towards power and control in human societies. Not only does power tend to corrupt but often it is the most ruthless and corrupt who tend to gain power.

leaders seem to be chosen by impersonal and ungoverned forces as a selective process, and the chosen are not usually those whom humanity would prefer to guide its destiny. Nor are these leaders free. They appear to choose, but it is the selective process generated by the ungoverned system that confers on them that role.

The powerful get to speak because the unchosen structure of the system determines which messages will be heard. That which chooses the chooser, determines the choice. Decisions are

## 6 Engaging the Powers part 2 - The Domination System

determined not by what would enhance the quality of human life, but by what will increase competitive power. People have become the slaves of their evolving systems, rather than civilized Society being the servant of its members.

It is not true that the selection for domination systemically selects what is harmful to people, the process is not hostile to human welfare, it is simply indifferent. Many things that serve domination serve people as well, such as a degree of social order or art or adequate nutrition.

Did Evil enter the world through the Domination system, sin, mortality, idolatry, alienation from God from oneself and from the world. These are existential realities intrinsic to human beings, but Satan, demons and the powers are relatively late arrivals. Humanity was slow to perceive the spirituality of complex institutions and forces, these spiritual realities are the peculiar result of domination.

It is characteristic of the powers that, they are established, staffed and perpetuated by people, but they seem to be beyond merely human control. It was the experience of a total system operating as it seemed, autonomously and even at times, malevolently, that gave rise to a perception of the role played by the powers in human destiny.

*Eph. 16:12. ‘For our struggle is not against the enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the Cosmic powers of this present Darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.’*

The powers are structures and institutions, in both their outer and inner manifestations that embody the Domination system in any historic moment.

{Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*} {Think of the modern banking system and bureaucracy of market economy, is like a living organism, that must grow or die.}

Those who now enjoy affluence and freedom, as well as power are predisposed to believe that benign forces shape destiny. But to the extent that blessings are incidental by-products of citizenship in Nations that currently enjoy domination status over others. Our well-being may be more a result of flagrant injustice than divine Providence. {18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Century British power and wealth was built not just on industry, but on slavery and military superiority.}

No social system has ever been purely totalitarian. There is always a mix of egalitarianism dominance and altruism/ No one mode ever prevails exclusively. Even in the most oppressively patriarchal structures, women and men continue to protest and to dream of a more equitable way.

### **The emerging biblical alternatives**

Neither Judaism or Christianity escaped this violent ethos. The early Hebrews all too often behaved in a manner indistinguishable from their predecessors and the predators of an earlier time. Though many of the teachings of Isaiah and other Prophets call for a partnership Society rather than a Dominator one.. Much of Hebrew scripture is a network of myths and laws designed to impose, maintain and perpetuate a dominator system of social and economic organisation.

Yahweh is depicted as ordering the Israelites to destroy, plunder and kill all but the Virgin daughters of their enemies and to take these as sexual slaves, concubines and involuntary wives. Deuteronomy 22: 13 - 29 exodus 21: 1 - 11 numbers 31: 18. Killing in war is divinely sanctioned in

## 7 Engaging the Powers part 2 - The Domination System

scripture, but even the mildest sexual indiscretion is punishable by death Leviticus 18:22 13 Deuteronomy 22: 22-29. Reproduction, the act of giving life is now tainted and unclean, except for those regions isolated from the spread of its virus, the dominating system rules the world. However this negative judgement on the Hebrew bible is not the whole story, there are also powerful prophetic denunciations of domination and a longing for a different dispensation where peace, Justice and equality would Reign, most notably the song of the servant, Isaiah 53. The prophets were the first people in history to regard a Nation's reliance on force as evil. Daniel represents the attitude of a wing of Judaism that rejected the militarism of the Maccabees and trusted in divine intervention and governance in public Life. By Jesus' day many Jews especially those of the Pharisaic party were practically speaking non-violent.

It was Jesus who revealed to the world God's domination-free order of non-violent love. His message was not wholly new; much of it was already contained or foreshadowed in those portions of the Hebrew bible congruent with a partnership Society. But in the eyes of the religious elites of his time, this new order is heretical.

Jesus teaches that we must elevate feminine virtue's from a secondary to a supportive or primary and central position, we must not be violent, but instead turn the other cheek, we must do unto others as we would have them do unto us. We must love our neighbours and even our enemies. Instead of the masculine virtues of toughness, aggressiveness and dominance, what we must value above all is Our Mutual responsibility compassion gentleness and love.

Jesus in his beatitudes shows his extraordinary concern for the Outcast and the marginalized, in his wholly unconventional treatment of women, speaking to them in public, touching them eating with them, even with harlots, and horror of horrors, teaching them. Braking all conventions by taking Children seriously and with respect. In his rejection of the Dogma that high-ranking men are favourites of God. Jesus' subversive proclamation of a new order, in which domination would give way to compassion and communion. He overturned the most rigidly upheld customs of his time. Within a few generations after the establishment of the church, the Domination system proved to be too strong. Sinners were excluded from the church, women were being squeezed out of leadership, and the wealthier, educated males were taking over authority from the poor and the unschooled.

The Roman empire joined the Jewish leadership in attempting to crush this non-violent movement of compassion and equality. Enormous pressure Forced the church towards precisely the kind of hierarchical and violence based system that Jesus had rejected. The rest is all too painfully evident heretics and witches hunted down and burned, inquisitions, Crusades, Emperors and Kings settling doctrinal disputes with armies, wars of Christians Against Christians, pogroms against Jews. Jesus' Dream of the new reality of a God centred egalitarian order, by the middle ages had turned into a nightmare.

Throughout the era of domination egalitarian Resurgences have appeared, the troubadours St. Francis of Assisi, the abolitionist movement, women's suffrage, the Civil Rights Movement, the

## 8 Engaging the Powers part 2 - The Domination System

feminist movement. Rebellions by workers, peasants, black slaves, colonials and women all were and are against a system in which ranking is the primary principle of social organisation. But none of them have been able to overturn the belief in fundamental rights of some, to dominate others.

### **The future of God's reign**

The distinction between what the Bible calls the way of God and the way of the world. Is a partnership Society, the reign of God and the Domination system. The difference between the story of Jesus and the myth of redemptive violence, provides just the sharp contrast we need. It supplies a framework for seeing dozens of lesser struggles, as parts of a single struggle between two fundamentally incompatible human systems. Here at last we are able to see the links between efforts towards nuclear disarmament and feminism, struggles of farmers for land and attempts to save Whales, campaigns to counter Fundamentalist book censorship, and non-violent efforts to topple dictatorships of the right and of the left.

God's reign does not represent polar opposites of the Domination system otherwise it would need the latter to supply the tension of opposites. The opposites are contained within God's reign, masculine alone would not be adequate, nor feminine alone, rather they would coexist and complement each other in an egalitarian order.

A common idea throughout the ages is the need of a goddess to create balance in human needs. God as mother needs to be supplemented with the positive qualities of God as father. Negative father qualities must be expunged from our God image and perhaps negative mother qualities as well. What we need are images that encompass the positive aspects of both. The issue of sexist language in our God out-look, goes far deeper than matters of simple Justice and fairness to women. What is at stake is a veritable revolution in our god images. Nothing could be more crucial because the images of God, create us. We will be better served not by androgynous views of a deity, since we have no human models for that. But by a variety of God images each with its strengths and liabilities fully acknowledged. God as mother, God as Father, God as Wisdom Sophia. God as friend. God as judge. God as the human and so on.