

## THE UNIVERSAL CHRIST.

### BEFORE WE BEGIN

So a couple of things here. First, it feels (at least at this starting point) that he is looking at Jesus as the person and Christ as the concept. Second, that Jesus is the religion of Christianity and Christ is the spirituality of Christianity. I want to see if he develops these ideas that have come to me

And...Why do we have the need to link "Jesus Christ" as a sort of unified naming. Maybe we should look at that.

8, a point is well-made by one of the participants. "Him" should be substituted by "the Christ" in the italicized portion, else you are already marginalizing and categorizing the statement.

Ken's closing question is a really good one—how can a Franciscan priest with deep monastic roots portray a Universal Christ?

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### Chapter 1 – Christ is Not Jesus's Last Name

Page 11, my question for the group at this beginning---what do \*you\* think of and/or feel when you say "Jesus", when you say "Christ" or when you say "Jesus Christ". Are there different feelings?

11, remember that at the time, having a "last name" would be a Roman tradition, really. In Judaism, you wouldn't have a last name---he would have been "Jesus Ben Yosef" (Jesus son of Joseph)...well, not \*really\*, but it would have been the traditional nomenclature. Another thought then---Augustus isn't someone anyone knows. Augustus Caesar is someone everyone knows. Is "Christ" a title, then? See 20, it seems so.

12-13, for all of the bad things that have happened because of Christianity, it started as a humanizing religion, didn't it? As a way to try to connect the individual person to something beyond tradition and a "from dust to dust" entity. To allow divinity to inhabit humanity.

13, another look—Jesus was the tangible, Christ is the idealization. This is a very human thing. We need our "heroes" to embody the ideals we yearn for. Ultimately, this is a manifestation of hope.

15, divinity and humanity, I seem to be on the right track. Using a part of my rabbi's sermon at Rosh Hashana (paraphrasing), we ourselves transmuted from offerings of the goat and bull to offerings of the soul.

15, bottom, there's some relation to the sensing of beauty and energy concepts that Redfield pursues in the Celestine Prophecy

16 top, why? Because we are contradictory beings. And we're alpha-omega beings. Maybe rationalism wouldn't exist without incoherence and chaos to rein in and "manage".

17, middle, I said this to my own study group---as we come to know more, we come to think less. But we could also say that we come to believe less, or to “faith” less. Because all this knowledge forced God out the door, engineered a withdrawal. A sometimes dirty word....magic.

17, bottom, “those who do it right that matter, not those who “say it right”. I have a pet saying. Maturity is doing the right thing more often. And doing things right more often.

18, I like that—framed as a problem and a threat.

18 bottom, an “incarnational worldview” may come close to “tikkun olam”—the repair of the world

19, middle—Christianity has become clannish. Has it? Is it fair to compare today to the birth-time of Christianity when there were united, yes, but a few thousand adherents. Expanding a religion into billions of people will probably necessitate some differentiation, if only to blend in cultural and geographical context.

19, i.e. Jesus was the teacher, Christ is the lessons

I’ve never thought about it, but in a curious way, I can draw a parallel in my own religion to what he’s espousing here. In our religion, his “Jesus” would be....the bible/old testament. A crystallized static statement of the laws and mores and history. And God would be our Christ---above and beyond mere words. Thus I’d adapt his statement to say “God is God, and the Bible is God’s historical manifestation in time.”

20, “the most effective lies are often the really big ones” And the self-evident truths are often the hardest to find

22, faith, hope and love, the intersected concepts---each requires the other two. I like and am in accord with that.

“how you begin is how you’re going to end”—neat phrase he gives us in a talk where he rails against the fact that the bible starts with 6 days of “and it was good”. Where did we lose our way to a path of negativity?

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## Chapter 2 – Accepting That You Are Fully Accepted

26, we are at our core still a deeply hierarchical species, craving structure. What is asked for here involves the breaking down of structure.

27, remember the time in which he lived. By this time, the royal hierarchy and the priesthood hierarchy were quite well established and a “business class” was beginning to flex its influence muscles as well.

28, “self knowledge of God in that creature = soul? Has some feel of his Immortal Diamond

29, “faith at its core is acceptance of being accepted”. Let me think about that.

29, bottom, don't forget about my closing a few books back when I came up with the personal divinity recipe 😊

32, middle, there's some veracity to having been obsessed with the messenger instead of paying attention to the message. This parallels the form-over-substance difficulty.

34, it is well to note that—at least among a fair amount of Jewish scholarship---the idea of “chosen people” is much more in the vein of a burden of responsibility---almost a communal form of what Jesus endured.

35, God is clearly not tied to a name. No, God is not. I can think offhand of five different “spellings” for the divine one in the Hebrew language. This is tied to a different and much bigger thoughtline of mine which asks whether we really do have a monotheistic religion. Our God has many, many faces and attributes. God the Avenger, God the Judge, God the Merciful, God the creator, God the keeper of covenants....(in fact, on Yom Kippur, as part of the penitential service, we talk about the “13 attributes of God”)

35, middle, nudging at a question---did democracy, humanism and the enlightenment lead Christianity astray?

36, bottom – 37 top, “You are not your gender, your nationality, your ethnicity, your skin color, or your social class”. Now there's a clarion call to arms.

37, here's another thought line. Jesus was the tangible, Christ is the idealization. This is a very human thing. We need our “heroes” to embody the ideals we yearn for. Ultimately, this is a manifestation of hope. Because the ideals \*were\* able to be lived, taught, seen and experienced....and so perhaps still are/can be

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### Chapter 3 – Revealed in Us – As Us

40, Jacob's dream. The more literal translation is “indeed, the Lord is in this place and I did not know it. How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God (the literal translation of “Beth El”) and this is the gate of heaven”.

41 bottom – 42 top, Paul never calls himself a prophet. Perhaps that is because he willingly took on his role. Almost to a person, the Jewish prophets (\*including Moses\*) had a common characteristic. They were reluctant and unwilling.

43, bottom, the lone individual being far too small, insecure etc. to bear the “weight of glory”. One of my pet sayings---people are too busy fighting with their lives to fight for their lives. I also have said that many people cannot carry the weight of their own lives.

44, I like this line of thought, which I have never really contemplated before---that God (and Christ) is as vibrantly present in one blade of grass as it is in an entire population of humans.

44 middle, here is some of Trish's call to include animals.

45, early Christians focused more and more on Jesus alone. In a way (and brace yourselves for this), this was a very human thing to do. I think this gets at another idea of mine. That Christians have “played it safe” by concentrating on Jesus as intermediary. It takes a particular courage, perhaps, to attempt to commune with God directly or to confront God. Instead, Jesus stands as the “master father confessor”? “Let HIM do the hard work” and we’ll do our part by tithing and going to church”. Food for thought perhaps.

45, bottom, view of reality being largely imperial, patriarchal and dualistic in the early A.D. If you read Harari’s Sapiens and Homo Deus, he explains that this was a natural outcome of the Cognitive Revolution---the invention of writing and such.

45 bottom – 46 top. Another pattern, a pattern of many religions, I think. As they age, they sort of fossilize and the form does take over from the substance. Why? Because in us humans is a driving need to add to, to “make our mark” on concepts. For me, this is part of another saying I have. A human needs a place to know. And a human needs to know his place (not in a derogatory sense, but in knowing where he or she fits within his community).

47 middle, modeling existence. True---think of Buddha or the heroes of the Mahabharata, or Confucius.

48-49 an interesting thought popped into my head here, which I shared in the chat. The Christ is the afterimage of Jesus. Ephemeral enough that we can shape it to our needs and how it can bring us meaning, but still with a certain basis to work from---and, in a way, it needs to be that we \*don’t\* see too many details about the original.

49 middle, “wisdom”. For me, wisdom is the study and application of a four-letter word. Care. If you care enough about someone or something, you will think hard, study and do things to make that someone or something better.

50, he’s clearly foreshadowing some chapters to come

50-51, I’m going to “dissertize” about two separate ideas here. The first is about one of the pillars of faith (I would daringly say \*any\* faith). HUMILITY. To do what Rohr is asking means to, kind of, make an offering of the soul. More bluntly, to embrace “less-ness”. We humans? As a species? We SUCK at being less. We really, really do. But is there value in being less? I vehemently say there is. Because once you’ve been less, you appreciate the more so much more. AND, you have a far greater well of empathy to draw from for others who are less. How can you help someone if you’ve never known want of your own?

The second idea is the next pillar of faith---FORGIVENESS. Rohr’s discussion of God on these 2 pages fits with a concept I briefly outlined on the 28<sup>th</sup> and will set down in a bit more detail here. That concept is what I have come to call “covenantal evolution”. I begin this with Noah. God is grieved at what (s)he has created. (She puts the world through the great carwash in the sky. (S)he says “oops—maybe I went too far”. God’s first covenant with Noah---that won’t happen again. We skip to Abraham and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (and if you read the old testament and the prophet writings, God doesn’t have much love for cities---see Babel, Nineveh, even Jerusalem in Lamentations...). For heaven’s sake, Abraham is \*negotiating\* with God. If there are 50 righteous people, the city will be spared. OK, if there are 10 righteous people the city will be spared. In the end, Abraham can’t round up the necessary few, but even there, Lot and his daughters are saved.

We come to this phrase, peppered through the bible. Leviticus 19 is the easiest source: "The stranger who sojourns with you shall be as a native from among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God." WHO were the Israelites strangers to in Egypt. The Egyptians? Not if you follow the Joseph story. I don't know if any scholars have climbed onboard this leaky boat with me, but I submit that the Israelites had become strangers to GOD---that they had forgotten the divine one and had lapsed. But this time, does God scourge them? Nope. He redeems them from Egypt, and keeps his covenant with their forbears. My view? The story here is how God himself/herself is transmuted and changes, to a God who will, even as (s)he weeps, wait endlessly to forgive his/her people.

52, bottom, you must be caught in a relationship of love and awe. Agreed.

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#### Chapter 4 – Original Goodness

56, top. Yes, 3 times that I can remember. In 1998, I completed my first Great Life Task---an 8-week trip to Australia and New Zealand. As part of that trip, I ended up at a place called Cable Beach at sunset on the west coast. It was quiet, and the beach was in sort of a protected bay, so there was little wave action. I was as far geographically as it is more or less possible to get from Toronto. I have summoned up the peace of those minutes many times in a hectic working career and it has kept me nourished.

In 2005, while in Ireland, I decided to take a cable car across a narrow strait to a place called Dursey Island to have lunch. Lunch involved me, the windswept promontory and a few sheep. It was as far away mentally and physically and emotionally and spiritually from my busy Toronto work-dominated life that I could get. I relished those moments. And---one of the rare times this ever happened to me---I got internally angry seeing a stranger...using a cellphone there.

In 2009, I was making my 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Yosemite Park, this time in the winter. Few people visit in the winter. That was fine with me. I hiked up the Upper Yosemite Trail and stopped at a sort of lookout point. I was absolutely alone. I sat down. For 10 minutes. I looked. I listened. I \*breathed\*. And I was at peace in a way I had seldom, if ever, been before. These remain transformative experiences for me.

And yes, in each case I felt a degree of satisfying smallness.

57, St. Bonaventure---"to work up to loving God, start by loving the very humblest and simplest things, and then move up from there". I like that. A lot. I so wish I could put my hands on my copy of the Celestine Prophecy---there is one chapter that is so in tune with this stuff.

57 bottom, that is a strong statement that I need to think about.

58 bottom – 59 top, yes that's true. Your occupation on the Sabbath is to study, to reflect. It is a kind of balance and taking stock and breathing within a busy life.

59 bottom, OK, I don't mind that definition of the purpose of religion.

60, top, I will only remind us that we should be careful with the word "happy"---remember what the Dalai Lama and Bishop Tutu had to say about it---that it is transitory and very short-lived, whereas joy is the thing to strive for as a state of being.

61, original sin. Let me take my treatise on forgiveness a little further. On Kol Nidre, the holiest night of the year, we begin the earnest prayers that will forgive us of our unfulfilled vows. It is made abundantly clear that the forgiveness *\*only\** applies to the vows you have made with God. If you have breached a covenant with another person, to that person's harm, God has no answer for you---you must seek the person's forgiveness.

62, top "his death instead of his life was defined as saving us". Hmm, yes! Gets at my earlier point about Jesus the intermediary and the worshipper "passing the buck" and abdicating responsibility. More now than ever because it is intertwined with my definition of leadership. Wanna hear it? "Leadership is accepting responsibility for ownership (of one's ideas, actions, vision). And accepting ownership of responsibility.

63, middle, it is maybe my great gift and also my fatal flaw. I tend to see the best in everyone. In doing so, I can sometimes be blind to faults, but I'd rather live the way I do, I guess. I *\*have\** identified that this trait often *\*brings out\** the best in people who can have very different relationships with others with whom they interact.

64, I'm very pleased to see him write about this scientific side of negativity. It's true—even I replay how I've failed people over and over again, excoriating myself as to how I could have done better or differently. Thankfully, I don't do that very often. I do try to cleave to another bon mot of mine---"to fail is to have successfully tried"

65, faith, hope and love---the *\*real\** holy trinity?

65, planted deep and at conception. OK, this is really going to be funny. Pulling something from my journals, I posted the exact same quote? For the book study on Immortal Diamond!

*"one cost of growing up that everyone recognizes is the loss of innocence. But I'll give you another hallmark. It is the gaining of inhibition. I see that nowhere more clearly demonstrated than with my two nephews. Nathaniel, the younger and 7 years, still cavorts and hugs and kisses at will. Gabriel, approaching 11 years, is....not exactly distant, but definitely "reserved" and not as impulsive as he used to be. Again, not necessarily a bad transition, but on the other hand, something precious is lost when you gain inhibition....or lose the ability to be uninhibited. When I think about it, almost all of my closest friends have a "wickedness" aspect to their character, an ability and desire to have fun, be adventurous and execute on a level of spontaneity. Do I have those things? Not sure, perhaps not, and so perhaps I cherish these friends because they provide some infusion and balance in that part of the life equation."*

65, bottom, if the human person is a "pile of manure" even the "snow of Christ" only covers it and doesn't undo it. You'll like this saying of mine: "An ounce of pretention is worth a pound of manure"

66, top, I had an unworthy thought of vampires needing to be invited into a house!

66-68, powerful---some of the strongest writing I've ever read from him.

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Chapter 5 – Love is the Meaning

70, bottom, and to extend outward we have to simultaneously shrink our inward, become less, suppress the ego

72, I've always liked best my adaptation of Robert Heinlein's definition of love. He gives it in "Stranger in a Strange Land". Jubal Harshaw is trying to explain this aspect of humanity to Mike the Martian and he says "Love is when someone else's happiness is essential to your own". I adapt this to "Love is when someone else's joy is essential to your own...and when someone else's sadness breaks your heart"

73, bottom, "our cultural meaning is "it's all about winning". And consumerism. He doesn't seem to be wrong and tracks what Yuval Harari declaims in Sapiens and Homo Deus (our small book study that looked at these 2 books agreed).

74, top, I don't quite have that explicitly, but instead my (in)famous "6 word life memoir"---your 6-word mission and vision statement. Challenge---come up with yours. Mine is "Lived Life. With Love. Full Cup."

75, "God is not in competition with reality but in full cooperation with it". That I like

75, bottom, another reference to the trinity. A bit of a sidebar, but I have had a thought as to where that concept came from. Each day, during our silent prayers, if there is a 10-person collective, we start those silent prayers aloud and say the "kedushah"---the proclamation of God's holiness. And there, we say "kadosh, kadosh, kadosh"....."holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.". We say it 3 times.

77, "failure is part of the deal" – per my comment at page 64. I emailed a question to Wayne and Brenda at about this point---can we find our faith if what we think is our faith hasn't been tested first?

78-79, this is the absence of expectations. The very last excerpt from my journals is probably a propos here:

*"Reading Harari's Sapiens follow-up, Homo Deus now. Deb and I were discussing a chapter of it in the car—where we have our best conversations. We both express the frustration at how little 'we' or 'you' (in a positive sense) is out there right now. I remarked that the pandemic has shown how vulnerable and inadequate democracy and capitalism are in their current form, that that form is defunct. But there is for me some action/reaction going on. As we race to make technological progress, it comes at the expense of regression in another area—humanity. Empathy. Care for others. Why do something that yields little tangible profit?"*

*Also talked again with my friend Julie. Her marriage to her husband Miguel is at an end. And she expressed today that love can't be enough. There must be trust. Of course, I said. But it got me to thinking about the theory of relativity again. Trust can be eroded from rather an unexpected source. Expectations. When you impose onto or create expectations about someone else, you are—for you—distancing them from themselves. Because I can't be in your mind, I can't know if my expectations are grounded in your reality. Yet they persist and the more they 'warp' my field of perception of you (even in the pedestal scenario) the more stress gets put on the relationship. I wonder if that is why mom was so chary of giving or receiving*

*compliments. Maybe she showed inestimable wisdom there and a deep commitment to remaining, purely, who she was.*

*And there's enough stress as it is. It is \*hard\* to hold to our concept of our identity when we are 'humaning'—in other words, adapting constantly...because we are exposed to constant change—in our environment, in our relationships, in the social and political and physical fabric of our existence. It's still a mystery to me how we don't fly apart at the seams"*

79, this idea works at another level. The “potential energy”, if you will, of the community continues to grow with each new member of the community.

80, truly, the only stupid question is the one you don't ask

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## Chapter 6 – A Sacred Wholeness

83, it is true we so seldom listen to ourselves---there's a lot of distracting noise out there. Getting back to the Perception Deception problem

84, are we talking about participative divinity here? (my term from that closing when I gave the divinity recipe out).

84, bottom, yet another of my bon mots, maybe the one that is most aligned with the book so far. “When it's not about you, it can be the most about you”. This seems to vibrate with Brenda's experience with her indigenous visitor.

85 bottom – 86, I hear again the ideas of Immortal Diamond

86, bottom, “remember, only like can know like” – that may be a little overboard to make his point. I'm not sure it is entirely true. Differences can be recognized too.

87, top, “without the mediation of Christ, we will be tempted to overplay the distance and distinction between God and humanity”. Which is what has happened with the worship of \*Jesus\* And which was perhaps a natural outcome for a faith that wanted to distinguish itself from the anthropomorphism of Roman and Greek while \*not\* associating with Judaism which had lost its way....and was a faith that was not followed by, shall we say, the ruling class of the time. One wonders what might have happened to Christianity's evolution if Constantine had \*not\* imperialed it.

87, middle, there's the direct reference to Immortal Diamond (grin)

87 bottom – 88 top, my smaller study group and I took up this addictive idea when analyzing happiness, since today's happiness is an insatiable beast. You know, if the nature of the beast is, well, a beast---then you have to either kill it or get off.

88-89, first we must listen. That is a skill that is in somewhat rare supply

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## Chapter 7—Going Somewhere Good

92, sacred fire. It was also, arguably, a way to differentiate. When it was Noah and the world, the agency used was water.

94 top, “there is no such thing as a nonpolitical Christianity”. Strong words. Politics? It is the study and application of influence. And influence is just power dressed up to go to a ball

96, bottom, humans and history both grow slowly. I might take issue with his statement here. I think both are growing very, very quickly, especially in the last 100 or 200 years. I don’t argue his evolutionary concluding statement in this paragraph

97 top “Life does not have to be perfect to be wonderful”. Guess what? YOU do not have to be perfect to be wonderful

99 top, no they don’t. I’ve opined more than once in our book studies about this—that for me science is the religion of knowledge and religion is the science of faith, with far more things in common than not.

99 bottom. Breathe in and breathe out. In fact, in our morning prayers each day, before we join the group, there is a prayer you can say that roughly translates as “the soul’s breath” and it is indeed supposed to make you aware of breathing in and breathing out. This is denoted by a vowel/consonant command in a letter at the end of many of the words in this prayer. The most “famous” word with this type of letter is Hallelujah

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## Chapter 8 – Doing and Saying

103-104, I spoke about this in group---rather painting the creed/credos as the picture frame, but that it is your picture and your pigments to use to paint the masterpiece of your faith and belief.

104 bottom, to be fair, a nascent religion needed to have some firm and fixed touchpoints for its worshippers.

105, he appears to answer my question in my notes at 87

106, a stark contrast in Judaism here where we say a healing prayer silently 3 times a day and twice aloud with an opportunity to mention specific individuals who we wish healing for.

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## Chapter 9—Things at Their Depth

110, is there a thought line that there is a path for all of us to achieve specialness and divinity?

113, not exactly the same point, but I have remarked that the greatest thing you can do for someone else—especially someone you will lose soon. Share your life with them. And share their life with you.

115, more resonance with Immortal Diamond. Finding depths he never knew. A couple of my sayings bear mentioning here. “Don’t make the journey and get somewhere and then look back and not be able to see the road that led you there.”

The other one is something I’ve had to say to too many close friends who, bluntly, should know better. But if they need me to say it, I say it. I tell them this: “You have so \*much\* of yourself to believe in. So much. All you have to do is believe”

117, outsiders have little authority or ability to reform anything. I want to think about that. I want to disagree with him, but I need to think about it first.

118 top, “Jesus is the here. Christ is the depth of here”. I quite like that.

118 bottom – 119, yes, I think I’d like to see that statue too!

119, it should be remembered that for a long, long time, art and music had political motivation behind them

119 bottom, we all know respect and reverence when we see it. You see, that’s the thing. I don’t actually think we \*all\* do know those things when we see them.

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## Chapter 10 – The Feminine Incarnation

121, baa-ding. Brave laddie Let’s see where he goes

122, the asterisked commentary about Protestants having become symbolically starved is germane, It is a microcosm of humanity’s great struggle---the true battle of the species. The battle between chaos and balance. Because achieving true balance—both individually and societally---has proven so very, very difficult. And that, perhaps, is because the species \*does\* crave a degree of chaos, as its fulcrum to effect growth and change.

122, why did Christians so fall in love with Mary? I could give a possible answer. Because they had inherited the duality of the complete human picture from the parent religion. See Genesis Chapter 1. God created Adam. And then he created Eve. Eve was just as much God’s work. 2 of every animal in the ark. Read the Genesis stories again---the females have significant text devoted to them. While it may not paint them in the best or most feminism way, they are not left out.

123, how about this? Mary was the vessel—the crucible, even---by which the Christ became embodied in Jesus. In that sense, it is a reinforcement of the feminine creating, birthing, nurturing and ultimately humanly loving (though I don’t think we ever get the concept of Mary’s love for her child?)

124, boxes again. It’s great if you know every millimetre of your box. But if you can’t cut your way out of your box and you can’t draw a sphere, you’re probably not much good to anyone.

125, it looks like he’s taking my thought line in part. But the feminine has (perhaps wrongly) often represented the “softer” and “vulnerable” side of human to the masculine strength and (perhaps wrongly) nobility. It \*may\* be that the renaissance painters---where you see probably the most intense

“blending” of figures so that male and female are sometimes hard to tell apart---were truly a reflection of religion in their time at least on this point.

125 bottom, very true

126, middle, Mary’s assumption—I always wondered about that!

127, top---I wonder....is part of this that she is not a figure to whom guilt is attached?

127, middle, God never comes uninvited----distressing thought of God as vampire (grin)

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#### Chapter 11 – This is My Body

130, I agree with his initial analysis, but also put forward the thought that physical intimacy is/can be the truest form of love and maybe even a necessary part of love.

131, “Lord I am not worthy” Ouch---I’ve never paid attention or known about that statement. That doesn’t help one much in trying to come to terms with what he is proposing in this book.

132, remember loaves and fishes---a precursor for what he wanted to do?

133, mmm, would resonate with anyone who has seen a Semana Santa parade

136, bridegroom Jesus---this has rooting in older tradition---Judaism talks about the Sabbath bride and Jerusalem as God’s bride.

137-138, this was a difficult chapter for me because I am so unversed in these esoterica and rituals of the religion.