

## THY KINGDOM COME

Introduction: Start of the School year exercise: what did you do this summer? what did you bring to school for your opening “Show and Tell”. Well let me answer: I read. I read a couple of books that were absolutely fascinating ... and so I brought my “little library” with me here tonight.

**First**, there is a book entitled “Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind” by Yuval Noah Harari (2015)

This book gives a sweeping panorama of where we came from and how the human species, homo sapiens, us, developed over the last 200,000 years. It does so with such grandeur and simplicity that it is stunning. President O’Bama in an interview mentions this as one of the most influential books he’s read since college.

**Second**, there is his follow up book entitled “Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow” (2017)

This books give another sweeping set of prophetic visions of what may happen in our evolution into the future, based on where we came from and what we are now doing. At times the picture is extremely exhilarating; sometimes it’s frightening. He does not “predict” what is going to happen; but in tracing certain paths of development, these are some of the trends he sees MAY happen.

In between these two books I would also like to once more refer to a **third** book, which I actually read LAST summer entitled “Thank you for Being Late: An Optimist’s Guide to Thriving in the Age of Acceleration” by the New York Times critique Thomas Friedman (2016) I mentioned this book once before as it gives us a picture of what is going on right now in our world. And remember - the year 2007 - the year that marks the star of a new “Age of Technology”

Put all three of these books together and you have a fascinating portrait of the modern world as it has evolved, is evolving and will evolve - a description of the general trends, the developing factors and the

evolutionary ideas that make up our current culture = THE MODERN PERSPECTIVE - we, a species of animals on earth, and how we have evolved for hundreds of thousands of years.

And for that alone, I recommend reading all three.

But then I also recommend two other books that I have had for many years.

A. The Phenomenon of Man by Chardin (1955)

B. The Divine Milieu by Chardin (1960)

They too present a picture, a fascinating world within an evolutionary perspective. And in many ways these two books parallel these three books - and I would say offer complimentary views of who we are and what we are all about.

In China, the **turtle** is a special symbol and good luck charm. The upper shell is in a bowl shape, representing the heavens; the lower shell is square, representing earth. So the turtle is the combining of heaven and earth. In many ways the turtle would be a good symbol for these books. Chardin's books - representing the heavens and a picture of evolution from that perspective; Yuval and Freidman's books representing earth and a picture of evolution from that perspective.

But in many ways these three fill in so many of the gaps left in Chardin's vision - because his was just that, a vision and not an explanation or description - seminal, but lacking in detail. So that these other three books actually are much more compelling and fascinating because of their broad sweep. But at the same time, boy do they offer a whole host of questions and challenges to that Chardin's vision. Let me give you two examples:

EXAMPLE ONE: From the first book.

One of the things that Yuval does in this work is demonstrate how we, homo sapiens, you and I - us - are fundamentally ANIMALS. Not in the allegorical

way we are used to thinking - creatures who don't behave or are just sinful or something religious like that.

No we are one of the species of animals that inhabit this planet - we are not fundamentally different from the other animals, except that we have taken control of the planet and all the other animals. But we are one of them, ... actually part of the Family of Great Apes.

The first hominids date back at least 4 million years; while our branch of hominids, homo sapiens, seems to date back to 200,000 years - and our journey has been a lengthy genesis amidst all kinds of other hominid branches.

One of the great "leaps forward" for our branch of homo was around 70,000 years ago, our leap to consciousness, the COGNITIVE REVOLUTION - a mystery even which even now we do not understand. BUT, at that time there were at least six other branches of humans - homo erectus, homo habilus, homo Neandrathal, etc - each of which was different. They in fact were our "brothers and sisters" in the evolutionary chain of hominid development.

Over time these other hominid branches became extinct - our last "brother branch" being homo Neandrathral which died out around 60,000 years ago - evolutionarily just shortly after our leap to consciousness. In fact it is suspected that homo sapiens actually wiped them out, that this leap to consciousness had something to do with it and thus we became the only remaining hominid branch to inhabit the earth.

But we still have cousins - chimpanzees and bonobos - biologically they are 98% just like us. They have a language (which we are now just beginning to discover - latest: 500 word sounds); they have social patterns; they educate their children; they use tools; they work together in a "community" - all kinds of things that we, in our inherent past insecurity, have only attributed to humans and failed to recognize in our cousins. (By the way, homosexuality and lesbianism are a normal part of their life habits.)

What Harari does is present us from a new, albeit old, perspective. His primary understanding of homo sapiens is that we are in fact animals who have developed and evolved over millenia.

Now note this picture of how we and our species began - and compare that with the story we all grew up with. That humans are “a little less than angels”; how we have a higher nature and therefor are NOT animals - that there is a great chasm between us and the animals world. WRONG! We are part of the animal kingdom. We come from an animal progeny; and we are a continuing developing animal species on plant earth.

And so our story - a) that we all started as distinctly created by God, b) as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and c) that we are somehow descendants of theirs. WRONG! Unless you're willing to admit that there were at least seven Adams and Eves - one for each branch of hominid that existed around 70,000 years ago. Of core this does beg the question → why did the other six branches became extinct.

But then come the the ultimate questions - posed to our follow up story: Jesus came to make up for the sin of Adam and Eve - that's why he had to die on the cross. But if there was no Adam and Eve ... then what? what happens to our Jesus story?

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Now hold on to this idea of a moment -and by the way, this is only one of hundreds of ideas presented in this book that will make your head go spinning. Let me now point out just again one of the hundreds of ideas presented in his second book.

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**EXAMPLE TWO:** In his second book, Yuval looks to the future and tries to use the pathways of the past and present to project into the future. He begins by pointing out that there were three main challenges, goals or tasks begun with the Industrial Revolution in the 19th and 20th Centuries and that we are in the process of meeting - (or at least, theoretically are able to); to

overcome hunger, plagues and war - the three evils we as a species have had to deal with all throughour past.

(1) He notes that today more people die of eating too much (obesity) than they do from malnutrition. (Sugar has become more dangerous than gun powder) Yes, there are still famines in different parts of the world, but they are “man made” - they only occur because of politics, not due to a lack of food. So the eradication of hunger is possible.

(2) He notes that today more people die from suicide than they do from wars. Again, yes there are war torn areas in the world. But once more, that is because of politics, not because people want to conquer each other. And in our day and age, due to our growing sensitivity to this issue, war has actually become less of a reality (although for those in these areas it's very real). So the eradiction of war is possible {Although who knows with Trump and North Korea these days.}

(3) And he notes that disease is on the way out, given current medical progress. While some of the most recent plagues - AIDS where 30 million people died; and Ebola where it too was feared to affect millions, we have come to the point that we can, even if only eventually, learn how to combat their effects. We are no longer helpless in the face of disease. Ebolad did NOT kill millions. It was defeated. So the eradication of plagues is possible

So he says we are now going to set a new goal for ourselves; and in fact in certain instances already have ... not simply to continue and finish the job of putting an end to famine, avoiding war and combatting new diseases...but now to move on to something new ... the new project of the 21st century will be ..... to eliminate death itself.

That is, to deter and finally over-come aging. He posits that today the Geeks in Silicon valley simply look upon death as a technical problem - as a biotechnical breakdown in the system - and since it's a technical problem it is solvable.

In fact there is a company, started in 2013, called Calico, a subsidiary of GOOGLE. It's company's goal is as stated ... "to combat aging, prolong life and ultimately eliminate death". YIKES!

"No death" - can you image what it would be like if there was no longer the fear of death ... and what happens to religion and it's proclamation of "life after death". Again, he points out that for many "modern Geeks" death is NOT a metaphysical reality. It is simply a biotechnical break down that can eventually be eliminated. Homo Sapiens is evolving into a "death-less" species. Read the book. There he explains how this will happen and what that project entails. FASCINATING.

One interesting side line ... Yuval points out that the "Geeks of Silicon Valley" of today ... in the 12th century they would have been the "clergy of Vatican city" - for these were the Geeks of the Middle Ages. At that time the Vatican was where you went for the latest developments in culture, science, politics, art, etc. Ironic!

And Yuval believes a "new religion" will actually be born out of Silicon Valley - and in that religion there will be no death. (Hence the title of this book - HOME DEUS - man become God).

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These books are amazing. Yuval's mind is amazing - the scope, the breadth, the dimensions of his knowledge - absolutely fascinating. By the way he is a professor of history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He got his doctorate in history from Oxford; he is 41 years old; he is gay and married to his partner Itzik Yahav who serves as his agent/manager. They were married in Toronto since gay marriage is not allowed in Israel, although they live in Jerusalem.

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So what's so important about all of this:

#1: The ideas contained in these books - these are the ideas of our MODERN WORLD. Students, young people, older educated professionals - these are their ideas. This is the scope of their intellectual horizon. So if on

the one hand you want to know what people are thinking and what ideas are spreading throughout culture, they are here in these three books.

#2: And in these sets of ideas, our ideas, our Christian ideas, the stories we have been told and with which we grew up are gone, out-dated, have no place. As Yuval notes, "God is dead; although it's taking awhile to bury the body." In fact yesterday I just read the most recent Pew Research on Religion in the USA. 24% of the population in the USA no longer has anything to do with organized religion (It used to be 8% in the 1990's); and within the LGBT community that jumps to 46%. And its not that they are "atheists" - they don't deny the existence of God; rather they are un-theists - in their world there is no God; no thought of God; no mention of God - God simply isn't part of the world they live in.

#3: What we really need to do is go back to the fundamental questions - which I have mentioned a number of times already

-who is Jesus?

-what is Christianity all about?

-what am I to do?

and the answers ... given to these questions in the past - Paul's scriptural answers; Augustine's Platonic answers; Aquinas' Aristotelian answers; even Luther's Nominalist answers - are no good anymore. They no longer will do.

#4: But ...

Here (holding up Chardin's books) ... here is the vision of Chardin. Here lies the new answers. And given the sweep of the ideas presented in Yuval's and Friedman's works, this is what we need ... a merger, a marriage of these two panoramas of our world ... the secular and the sacred ... the square shell and the bowl-shaped shell of the turtle ... to form a new way of understanding and expressing the answers to our questions making use of Chardin's vision and to form a new understanding of evolution in complimentary ways. If not ... if this merger does not take place, I'm afraid Christianity will eventually pass the same way of the ancient Egyptian Religions of Isis and Osiris.

Yuval asks an interesting question. Stop and think - in the last two hundred years, what is the most important discovery made in the world? penecillin,

antibiotics, artificial heart, satellites, internet, the idea of evolution, splitting the atom ... you can make a whole list of things. Now ask the question - in the last two hundred years, what is the most important contribution made to the world by religion? ... and there is no answer. Just a blank. NOT GOOD!

#### CONCLUSION:

So I recommend that you read these books. They are a bit “thick and heavy”. They can be a bit intimidating. But they are fascinating.

AND ... if you would rather, there is a whole host of lectures and talks which Yuval gives that are on YouTube. You can go there and listen to him speak about many of his ideas. He is really a great speaker; and I enjoy listening to him talk - and besides “he’s cute” to look at ;-)

As autumn and winter arrive, when the cold weather arrives; and the snow storms hit - a couple of interesting books to curl up with and read. You will find the ideas there interesting, fascinating and challenging. God help us.