

# **THE SERPENT AS A SYMBOL OF GOOD & EVIL: LITERATURE, RELIGION, LEGENDS**

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First and foremost, a “serpent” is a snake. It is from this creature that other mythological creatures have evolved through literature, the arts, and sacred myth. So as a point of clarification, this paper utilizes the terms “serpent” and “snake” interchangeably and sometimes together as when referring to the “serpent snake.”

I can recall two experiences with snakes over the brief span of my life. One while working in my garden one summer morning and the other as a child when I picked up a dead snake to remove it from the street in the neighborhood where I lived. The poor creature had been run over by a car. My gardening experience was fascinating. As I was pulling weeds along our fence line I disturbed a garter snake. In a flash it shot up the six-foot privacy-fence at about a forty-five degree angle nearly making it to the top before it fell to the ground and disappeared. Neither one of the snakes was dangerous. They were just unsettling enough to make a lasting impression. Any other understanding of snakes I had prior to preparing for this paper came from my exposure to religious and cultural myth, literature, and of course, Indiana Jones. That is to say, my experience with snakes has been very limited.

However, it didn't take long to discover the enormity of the scope of this topic. The serpent as a symbol has had widespread use throughout the world for over 24 millennia with a rich complexity of subtle and varied symbolic and religious meanings. Cultures on every continent have sacred serpent myths. Many of them offer positive associations with eternal life, healing, fertility and transformation. It is in this light that James Charlesworth makes the claim that many otherwise credible experts in their respective fields of psychology and religion are myopic often vitiating their otherwise carefully thought out and insightful work with errant assumptions and conclusions limiting them to phallic legend, for instance, with little or no historical criticism. He says,

Unfortunately none of these authors apparently knows that in the Indian Tantric cult a goddess is depicted with a serpent-phallus emerging from the vulva, that some "gods" in antiquity are depicted with an erect phallus that is a serpent, or the Egyptian fertility god named Min is depicted as ithyphallic and also with an upraised hand.

Equally devoid of open investigation of the varied symbolical meanings of the serpent in antiquity and world culture are the numerous books that are theocentric or Christocentric. Such authors are content to explain how God or Christ has conquered the serpent.<sup>1</sup>

The serpent's commanding place in the human psyche has been expressed through art, literature, and religious myth including drawings and paintings on walls of caves and carved symbols in stone and clay. Most all of them convey a relationship between the human and the divine. When we looked to the skies we saw serpents in the constellations and when we looked to an underworld serpents were there. They were in the seas and in the trees and everywhere in the human imagination. Whether in the heavens, on the earth, or under the earth, serpents in myth, religion and culture have been present to bless, inspire, protect, tantalize, endanger, deceive and guide the human family.

In the *The Good and Evil Serpent*, Charlesworth recalls an encounter he had with a King Cobra. He was thirteen years old at the time. He remembers a golden domed figure rising before him reflecting in the sunlight that shone brightly on them. It was massive in size and weight and stood erect with its eyes on level with his as it swayed before him. He recalls being simultaneously frightened and awestruck at the wonder of this beautiful creature, as it stood erect, the sun transforming him into blinding gold. Time and eternity stood still for Charlesworth as they looked deep into each other's eyes.

The experience of awe in the face of a power greater than self is fundamental to religious experience. Rudolf Otto explores the foundation of religious experience in his classic work, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*. Not to be confused with irrational, Otto explores the non rational in terms of the inability to express in words the nature of the experience. He calls this mystery the “numinous” and identifies it as basic to religious experience. The ‘numinous’ element, from the Latin numen, is the most general Latin word for supernatural divine power.<sup>2</sup> The experience of the “numinous” is not an intensified experience of an ordinary one. It is a stand-alone experience, one of a kind, unique unto itself that has a lasting effect. For lack of adequate terms to apply to the experience, Otto identifies it as “dread”. Dread as he uses it is not fear. Fear eventually subsides or fades, according to Otto. “Fear does not become dread in response to the numinous; rather, we cease to feel ordinary fear and move into an entirely different feeling, a dread that is aroused by intimations of the numinous or the actual experience of the numinous.”<sup>3</sup>

The experience of the numinous elicits three possible manifestations: first, to shudder such that the soul is rendered speechless trembling inwardly to the deepest fiber of our being ... it implies that the spirit is beginning to loom before the mind to touch the feelings.” Second, to enter into a state of blank wonder and awe. And third, it can render a feeling of insignificance and even nothingness or smallness in the presence of the “wholly other”, wholly with a “w.”<sup>4</sup> Otto’s explanation is far more in depth than this brief summary. However, he refers to these three qualities of the numinous as the “mysterium tremendum.” The experience that renders a person to one or any combination of these states is rooted in real time while at the same time it becomes otherworldly and indelibly transforming.

Charlesworth does not address Otto’s theory but he states his encounter transcended the normal and that it “really happened.”<sup>5</sup> It is easy to conclude that his experience was an experience of the “numinous” as outlined by Otto. The experience loomed in his mind for six decades before publishing perhaps one of the most exhaustive works ever written on the Serpent and its relation to myth, religion, and literature. His was an experience of multiple mysterium tremendum or aspects of the numinous. Back to his real time experience:

Charlesworth says,

The place was the Serpenterium in Miami, Florida. Dr. William E. Haast, the head of the Serpenterium, was beginning to milk a king cobra. He was assisted by two young men. The monster shook loose and slithered toward me over the recently cut green grass. Then he chose me from about one hundred spectators. He swiftly rose up and stared at me. I felt him towering over me, the sun flashing off his golden hood, which was now fully expanded. The only words Haast spoke were, “Don’t move son.”<sup>6</sup>

Though Charlesworth imagined the cobra to be over 20 feet long and over 300 pounds Haast informed him it was only 15 feet and weighed about 20 pounds. That was no experience of a garter snake running up a privacy fence. He would later learn that a serpent can rise up to one-third its length. In this case the giant cobra raised itself to five feet and came virtually eye-to-eye with him. One can only imagine the response of prehistoric people who had no other means to express themselves other than to draw on walls of caves or to cut into stone that others might understand their experience.

Cultures in the West typically view the serpent as sinister and evil and symbolically associate it with sin, deception, danger and even death. Those of the Abrahamic faiths, Muslims, Christians, and Jews, most often associate the serpent with evil as do my Merriam-Webster's Collegiate and New Oxford American dictionaries. To take a quick look at other dictionaries one will find that the common denominator is that serpents are evil. Theological dictionaries do not offer much if anything in the way of a positive portrayal. Therefore we continue by limiting our scope to some real attributes of snakes that set them apart not by their symbolic or mythical attributes but attributes based upon observation; attributes that have likely contributed to their rise to take a place among the gods.

The snake moves rapidly and without a sound and is very elusive: a general characteristic attributed to deities. It moves by moving from left to right and backwards to move forward. It moves with a circular movement. This kind of movement can be seen as symbolic of the movement of time as it moves forward in a repetitious fashion. As in human history we move from war to peace, from sickness to health in a hopeful progression. This gives way to

the Ouroboros which is a snake positioned in the form of a circle with its tail in its mouth.

This symbol is used cross culturally as a symbol of time eternal. The Ouroboros is found in an ancient Egyptian text dated from the 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It is found in Roman symbology. It appears in the philosopher Plato's work, in pre-Christianized Greece, in Gnostic texts, and throughout the Middle Ages with all but one Norse myth representing eternal life. The symbol can be seen today in stylized jewelry and some wear it permanently as a tattoo. The one exception to the rule is the Norse myth of the Thunder-god Thor and the Midgard Serpent. Here the serpent encircles the world with its tail in its mouth. By tightening and loosening its grip on the world the serpent causes high waves and tsunamis that kill sailors and people on land. The battle between Thor and the serpent will continue until the end of time when Thor at last wins the battle by killing the serpent with himself taking a deadly blow. From this ending a new creation is born where humanity and the gods will live in harmony forever. Here the serpent takes the form of an Ouroboros as a symbol of death and destruction. Renewal and eternal life does not come until the death of the Midgard Serpent.

The fact that snakes shed their skin up to four times a year and emerge with new, bigger and stronger bodies is an attribute that makes them ripe as symbols of transformation, new life, and eternal life. Additionally, the ancient would translate wrinkles in the skin as something that comes with old age signaling impending death. This could be avoided if only they could shed their skin. It isn't much different today. Wrinkles signify that time is closing in on us. There are numerous temporary solutions for creating smooth young looking skin but most unfortunately do not make our lives any longer.

The snake has no hearing. It doesn't have the hardware. Contributor to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, J. A. MacCulloch, stated, "As certain snakes are susceptible to musical, rhythmical sounds or movements, these are used by snake-charmers to exhibit their power over them", a claim that is misleading.<sup>7</sup> It is the movement of the charmer's flute that elicits the snake's response. The snake's deafness could signify to the imaginative mind that it is attuned to otherworldly voices since it is deaf to earthly noise. This attribute of the serpent contributes to its serving as a symbol of wisdom. There are numerous references to God being found in the silence in biblical and other literature. The wisdom of poets and of holy people in numerous religious traditions confirm this understanding. Nineteenth century Indiana poet, Joaquin Miller, is one example. In his poem titled "The True Poet" he expressed it this way,

O, heard ye the eloquent song of God's silence"  
The vines are His lines; and the emerald sod,  
The page of His book, and the green-girdled islands  
Are rocked to their rest in the cradle of God.  
God's poet is silence! His song is unspoken  
And yet so profound, and so loud, and so far,  
That it thrills you, and fills you, in measures unbroken  
The unceasing song of the first morning star...<sup>8</sup>

The snake only hisses. It has no voice. Thus it cannot communicate with humans except as in legend and literature where those who are attuned to them and through them hear the voices of gods and demons. J.K. Rowling put this characteristic to use in her best selling Harry Potter series.<sup>9</sup> In the series only those who have a special ability to hear and speak to the snake can communicate with and/or through the creature to a higher power. Potter could both hear and speak parseltongue, an ability that in Rowling's series only a small number of

powerful wizards commanded, Voldemort in particular. To the ancient the fact that snakes had no voice could imply that the serpent lives in a world of silence in which the word of God alone can be heard and God alone hears what is spoken in the human heart; the quiet and contemplative heart is a wise one. This is good reason for pharaohs to wear an image of the cobra on their crowns and to have it depicted on their statuary.

In cultures across the globe snakes are often used as a symbol for fertility and for the male sex organ. The male snake has two penises both used solely for copulation. This unique characteristic lends itself to the serpent being a symbol for both sensuality and fertility. The female serpent produces huge numbers of offspring also lending itself to being a symbol of fertility.

It has been a symbol of fertility for other reasons as well. For instance “the ancient Chinese connected serpents with water and life-giving rain.”<sup>10</sup> To Aboriginal Australians the Rainbow Serpent resembled meandering water across the landscape and has been worshipped as a deity from ancient times. It is represented in both art and literature with reference to the fertility of the land. To this day the people of Australia celebrate the Rainbow Serpent Festival, a premier four-day festival drawing people throughout the world to celebrate international music, the arts, and alternative lifestyles.<sup>11</sup>

The snake has a split tongue that exits through a hole in its mouth so the mouth need not be opened for it to strike. The snake also uses its tongue to sense its environment and track its prey. The split tongue has symbolized duplicity, lying, and may have influenced some commentators on Genesis. The longstanding Native American use of the idiom to “speak



with a forked tongue” characterizes a person as saying one thing while meaning another. The characteristics of duplicity and lying are often associated with evil. In addition to religious texts and mythology, this makes for a good plot in other literary works. In its second of three definitions *The New Oxford American Dictionary* defines “serpent” as, “a sly or treacherous person, especially, one who exploits a position of trust in order to betray it.” Shakespeare offers a quotable line in *Romeo and Juliet* that fits the definition well:

O serpent heart hid with a flowering face!  
Did ever a dragon keep so fair a  
cave? Beautiful tyrant, feind angelical,  
dove feather raven, wolvis-ravens  
lamb! Despised substance of devinest show,  
just opposite to what thou justly  
seemest - A dammed saint, an honourable villain!<sup>12</sup>

And from Act I of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*: “Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under ‘t.” Shakespeare harnesses his listeners’ skepticism by the use of such serpentine references to warn of the deception and danger that may lie unsuspected beneath an apparent beauty. It has been suggested that Shakespeare’s’ inspiration for this particular metaphor was taken from Virgil’s *Eclogues* (3.93),

“You, picking flowers and strawberries that grow  
So near the ground, fly hence, boys, get you gone!  
There’s a cold adder lurking in the grass.”

In his book titled, *The Royal Play of Macbeth*, Henry Neill Paul notes that by using these lines Shakespeare is making allusion to arguably the most significant moment in his time, the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, a plot to kill the king. To commemorate the discovery of the plot King James I commissioned a medal featuring a serpent hiding amongst flowers. Anyone who saw Shakespeare’s drama in Jacobean England would have immediately recognized the context and significance of Shakespeare’s allusion.<sup>13</sup> With regard to Virgil’s *Eclogues*, it seems likely this is the source of the idiomatic phrase, “snake in the grass,”

“There’s a cold adder lurking in the grass.” Indeed, the serpent has served and continues to serve as a metaphor to characterize the seditious nature of shadowy villains and their twisted plots. And, of course, these few lines express the general feeling about snakes that most of us have today: they are undesirable and dangerous creatures.

Snakes can hide anywhere: in trees, caves, tunnels and in the grass, under rocks and flowers, in the water, in holes, in cactus bunches, in nests, in sand; the list is endless. The horned viper is virtually invisible in desert sand. It is no wonder that to the ancients the serpent symbolized the hidden one, the invisible God. It can be present and not perceived symbolizing the elusiveness of God, the hidden one. On the other hand, John the Baptist called the religious leaders of his day a brood of vipers. The elusiveness of the serpent can be a characteristic of evil as well.

Like no other creature the snake shows no fear. It doesn’t bow in submission. It either relies on passive strategies, or rises to face the danger making it even more revered. To what extent is this true? The king cobra can be lightning fast, and can issue its deadly strike in the blink of an eye, and can kill an elephant if it so chooses.

Charlesworth says,

While many scholars err in presupposing that the snake is to be dreaded and is a symbol of evil, some experts on snake symbolism exaggerate the positive symbolism of the serpent, often concluding that this creature symbolizes only, or primarily, immortality.<sup>14</sup>

My wife names the giraffe as one of her favorite animals and has expressed on more than one occasion that she would like to help feed them at the zoo a privilege offered by the world class Henry Doorly Zoo when we lived in suburbia Omaha a number of years ago. We now are looking forward to doing that at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo having recently discovered visitors there are allowed to feed the giraffes. Many zoos permit children to feed and pet the goats and lambs. Visitors can watch as the large cats and various species are fed but serpentariums are closed when the snakes are fed. The snake is carnivorous and eats its food live and can consume creatures up to 20% its body size. It swallows its prey whole somewhat reminiscent of a ravenous teen eating a slice of pizza. Snakes do not chew or munch. Spectators are kept away when the python is given a live fawn for dinner. The snake will suffocate it by wrapping itself tightly around its prey before "dining" on the fresh flesh. For the ancient as well as for us this would be horrifying to watch. It is not surprising that the Baby Boomer generation is referred to as "the pig in the python" when addressing concerns over the sustainability of the Social Security system. By the way, a large python, a member of the boa family, typically grows to be larger than the constrictor and can and will eat a pig... whole. It's nothing like a Garter Snake running up a fence.

With due respect to mythological characters who have stepped upon the stage of the human spirit and psyche; to Thor the hammer-wielding god who will defeat the Midgard Serpent at the end of time, to the medieval Basilisk with body of lizard and head of chicken whose powers were not unlike those of Medusa whose victims would turn into stone when they looked upon her and who once again appears again in Rowling's Potter series, this time in the form of a serpent snake, and to the countless other mythological Gods and creatures who

have harkened from the heavens and the watery abyss, with all due respect to them we turn now to Egypt and the texts of the First and Second Testaments.

Egypt is perhaps one of the most fascinating studies in the world for archeologists, linguists, and historians. It is the premier ophidian cult on the world stage with virtually every aspect of its political, social, mythological, and religious systems represented with serpent symbols in one form or another. The system of writing in hieroglyphs was developed from pictorial art and influenced by serpent iconography. Hieroglyphic writing appears around 3000 BCE. The Middle Egyptian language dates from 2240 to 1740 BCE and continued to be used into the Roman period. It has two phonograms that are symbols of a snake, one in the form of a horned viper, the other in the form of a uraeus. The uraeus is a stylized form of the Egyptian cobra symbolizing deity, royalty, divine authority, dominion, wisdom and power. According to the Strasbourg Museum of Archaeology the uraeus personifies the eye of Re which destroys enemies by fire, the royal crown being identified with the eye of Re. The cobra is the ideal serpent to guard the pharaoh. The Egyptians observed it has no eyelids and would therefore always be awake to guard the pharaoh. This characteristic also signifies wisdom, for the unblinking eye sees all things without interruption. It is the All Seeing Eye.

When Thutmose III took the reins of power in Egypt he created the greatest empire Egypt had ever seen. He set his eyes on distant horizons beyond the Nile moving his army along the coastline of the Mediterranean until turning southeast into the lush Jezreel Valley. Here he would lead his forces in what would become the world's first recorded battle. He defeated the Canaanites who inhabited the region. The battle took place at Tel Megiddo in 15th

century BCE. The Egyptian victory is recorded in detailed hieroglyphs at the Temple of Amun-Re.<sup>15</sup>

Thutmose required the kings of the Canaanite states to each send a son to the Egyptian court where they would receive an Egyptian education. Upon returning to their homelands, they would rule with Egyptian sympathies. This was just a beginning but with several campaigns, conducted almost annually, the territory fell securely under Egyptian influence.<sup>16</sup> The confluence of cultures under Egyptian influence did not end with the Canaanites.

One of the most fascinating and unique archaeological finds to demonstrate cultural, mythological, and religious assimilation of the Greco-Roman world is found in the Catacombs of Kom-el-Shuqafa in Alexandria, dated from the first century CE. The entrance to the Catacombs is full of serpent symbols and by far represents the epitome of blended cultures. To enter the burial chamber one must pass through a doorway over which is a frieze of cobras with a winged disk beneath. On either side are circular shields both with a Medusa in their centers, Medusas there to petrify grave robbers. Two snakes wearing the double crown of Egypt represent the benevolent deity Agathoaimon. The snakes are coiled around a representation of Hermes and the beribboned thyrsus of Dionysus.<sup>17</sup> Charlesworth says,

“Most impressively, each massive Agathadaimon on the sides of the entrance to the burial chamber holds a caduceus of Hermes Psychopompos (the god who leads the dead into the next world). Above each large serpent is a Medusa with snakes in her hair.” In this collage

of serpent imagery we have the single most remarkable confluence of serpent symbols representing a variety of mythologies and religious beliefs that converge on one central point. This display of serpent symbolism conveys the promise of immortality.

Egyptian influence upon the Hebrews was inevitable. They had lived in bondage under Egyptian rule for several generations. Moses on the other hand was raised in the royal court and elevated to a position of authority reportedly to possible succession. Considering the centrality of the serpent snake to Egyptian order and religious myth, the nature of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh is of major significance. Moses' staff is transformed into a snake when Aaron casts it to the floor before Pharaoh's magicians and it proceeds to consume the snakes the magicians produced in the confrontation. The message conveyed here is that the Hebrew God is more powerful than Pharaoh and all the Gods of the Egyptian empire combined. Moses raised his staff to bring down 10 plagues upon Egypt and lead the people of God from bondage to freedom. Here the ithyphallic image of Egyptian art and statuary depicting the power and authority of the Pharaoh is effectively transferred to Moses, the Pharaoh's rightful successor. And through Moses the one God has claimed authority over all the principalities and powers of the Egyptian empire and leads the Hebrews through the watery abyss from the death of bondage to a new life of freedom.

The most striking image of the serpent in the Second Testament is found in the 14<sup>th</sup> verse of the third chapter of the Gospel attributed to John that reads, "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."<sup>18</sup> The reference takes us back to a post Exodus event when the people

were complaining. They didn't like the food they had and claimed they had no water. In response to their complaint God sent poisonous snakes that bit them and many died. The people repented so God instructed Moses to make a poisonous serpent and to raise it on a pole so those who looked upon it would be healed. Moses made a serpent of bronze and raised it up and it served as he was told it would.<sup>19</sup> The passage from John reminds us of the serpent imagery in Moses' serpent-staff confrontation and of the healing promise made Israelites following their Exodus from bondage to freedom.

The Gospel attributed to John and the Catacombs of Kom-el-Shuqafa are dated from the late first century CE. John's audience was the Greco-Roman world. The serpent-cross is a serpent on a pole. John's Gospel account strikes a similar tone that calls to mind the ancient symbols of the primordial serpent snake. Romans and Greeks would know the message that is being sent here without question. The image represents Jesus as the one who leads people from death through the watery abyss to life. It is identical in meaning to the caduceus of Hermes Psychopompos, the god who leads the dead into the next world. This too is a serpent on a pole. The Jews of the day easily recognized the image in their sacred texts primarily regarding its role as God's gift to them in the wilderness as a means of healing and restoration given in response to their repentance.

It didn't take long for disks to appear in early Christian sculpture, and religious art. The disks appear as halos or disks set behind the heads of saints. Depictions of God as the All Seeing Eye were quickly assimilated. These images today serve as a reminder of the one who

watches over us with an unblinking eye; identical to the meaning of the sun disk as used by the ancient Egyptians and the sun disk on the frieze in the Alexandrian catacombs.

The serpent snake symbolizes the human and the divine at their worst and at their best. From ancient times she has pointed us to the mystery of the gods and all they have hoped for us and we of them. These remarkable creatures have born the yoke of mystery for the human community and continue on that given path to this day reminding us that our creator watches overs us with an unblinking eye, that our creator speaks to us in the silence of our hearts, that god is the one who gives us fertile ground and brings forth sustenance from the earth. Rather than despise serpents, perhaps we should look upon them with gratitude for the mystique, the meaning, insight, and inspiration they have offered humankind through the course of time. The memory of that dead snake in the road has always been somewhat saddening to me in a strange way and I have wondered where that amazing little garter snake disappeared to, never to be seen again.

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<sup>1</sup> Charlesworth, James H., *The Good and Evil Serpent* (Yale University Press, 2010), p.25 Charlesworth is the Princeton Theological Seminary's George L. Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature specializing in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old and New Testaments, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, Jesus research, and the Gospel of John. He has excavated at Migdal, Bethsaida, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Khirbet Beza, Qumran, and elsewhere. His book *The Good and Evil Serpent* is perhaps the most exhaustive work on this subject.

<sup>2</sup> Otto, Rudolf; Harvey, John Wilfred (2013-03-18). *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (Kindle Location 171). Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> *Otto on the Numinus* (<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/gothic/numinous.html>), April 19, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *The Good and Evil Serpent*, p. x.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. x.



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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> Joaquin Miller, from "The True Poet," *In Classic Shades, And Other Poems*, 1890

<sup>9</sup> J. K. Rowling's seven-volume Harry Potter series was perhaps the single most popular series among children and adults than just about any series written since J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings Trilogy* or C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*. Tolkien's series was written in stages between 1937 and 1949 and Lewis's between 1949 and 1954.

<sup>10</sup> *The Myths Encyclopedia*, "Serpents and Snakes (<http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Sa-Sp/Serpents-and-Snakes.html#b>), April 17, 2013

<sup>11</sup> *Rainbow Serpent Festival 2013* ([http://www.rainbowserpent.net/2013\\_festival](http://www.rainbowserpent.net/2013_festival)), April 18, 2013

<sup>12</sup> *OpenSourceShakespeare*, "The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet", Act III Scene II, "Capulet's Orchard"

([http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play\\_view.php?WorkID=romeojuliet&Act=3&Scene=2&Scope=scene](http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play_view.php?WorkID=romeojuliet&Act=3&Scene=2&Scope=scene)), April 17, 2013

<sup>13</sup> *Shakespeare Online*, "The Gunpowder Plot" (<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/biography/gunpowderplot.html>) April 10, 2013

<sup>14</sup> *The Good and Evil Serpent*, p. 51

<sup>15</sup> Wikipedia, *Battle of Megiddo*

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Megiddo\\_\(15th\\_century\\_BC\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Megiddo_(15th_century_BC))) April 23, 2013

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. April 23, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> *The Good and Evil Serpent*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>18</sup> *The New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition)*, "John 3:14" copyright 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the World Council of Churches

(<http://bible.oremus.org>) April 25, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. "Numbers 21:4-9", April 25, 2013