more like a forest of trees, on a small hillock, with its edges taking flame; sitting comfortably in its upper reaches are the Virgin and Child, her lush blue garment spread out like a picnic blanket. The child holds a small mirror in his left hand – the spectulum mundi (“mirror of the world”), in which the salvator mundi (“savior of the world”) is shown, for it reflects his mother and himself. God the Father, though absent from the image, is shown in a half-figure, flanked by angels, in a panel above the main structure.

Fromm has followed a not-uncommon patriarchic and medieval Christian reading of this moment, in which the burning bush prefigures the Incarnation: The Virgin Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit without being consumed by the flames of concupiscence. The post-mortem soteriological implications are appropriate for a work probably intended originally for René’s funerary chapel.


Ori Z. Soltes

**Fromm, Erich**

Erich Fromm (1900–1980), psychoanalyst, professor, and popular author on religion and social issues, was born and educated in Germany and fled the Nazis in 1933, emigrating first to the United States and then to Mexico City. Raised in an Orthodox Jewish home, he referred, throughout his vast writings, to biblical texts and narratives, mining them for insights and aphorisms, and using them as guidelines toward a “sane society.”

In *You Shall Be as Gods*, Fromm characterized the OT as a “revolutionary” book whose theme is the liberation of people “from the incestuous ties to blood and soil, from the submission to idols, from slavery” (Fromm 1966: 7). He praised “radical mystics” and Karl Marx for urging people to be their own masters and makers of their own lives (Fromm 1963: 156). He also polemicized against the Christian concept of sin (Fromm 1966: 122), though he did paraphrase NT passages (Fromm 1962: 156).

To Fromm, the garden of Eden narrative in Gen 3:1–24 teaches that man

... has to experience himself as a stranger in the world, as estranged from himself and from nature, in order to be able to become one again with himself, with his fellow man and with nature. (Fromm 1963: 204)

In *Man for Himself*, the story of Cain (Gen 4:1–17) illustrates that people are more afraid of rejection than punishment (Fromm 1947: 147). In *The Heart of Man*, the woman who comes before King Solomon and demands that the baby under dispute be cut in half (1 Kgs 3:16–28) is an example of the “necrophilous person” who is “willing to kill or die for justice” (Fromm 1964: 41).

From Samuel’s concerns regarding an Israeliite monarchy (1 Sam 8:1–22) and from other narratives, Fromm concluded that the biblical God’s role in history is restricted to sending messengers, the prophets, who guide people in mature decision-making (Fromm 1966: 119–20; 1963: 205). One such messenger, Jonah, symbolizes the folly of a life of escape and the wisdom of learning to live differently (Fromm 1951: 23; 1966: 119). The biblical God is also, to Fromm, a model of the kind of “knowledge” (Heb. ḥeyyāh) that leads to true liberation (Fromm 1966: 93). Fromm characterized the biblical concept of a prophet as a navi (spokesman) who “sees the future because he sees the forces operating now and the consequences of these forces unless they are changed” (ibid.: 118–19). He regarded Isaiah as expressing “the very opposite of authoritarian philosophy” (Fromm 1941: 171).

Fromm lauded biblical interpretation that is “in the spirit of Renaissance humanism,” decrying a “medieval” approach (Fromm 1966: 95n). Yet he employed classic hermeneutical methods. He adopted an allegorical approach in regarding the burning bush (Exod 3:2) as symbolizing “the paradox of all spiritual existence, that in contrast to material existence its energy does not diminish while it is being used” (Fromm 1966: 93). He utilized philosophical methods, exploring the meaning, connotations, and implications of biblical Hebrew. In Beyond the Chains of Illusion (Fromm 1962: 116), he focused on the Hebrew term nora (awesome). In The Sane Society, the Hebrew terms rahamin and shuvah, which he translated as “motherly love” and “erotic love,” are offered as paradigms of different kinds of relationship (Fromm 1955: 34).

In The Sane Society, Fromm equated “alienation” with the biblical concept of idolatry (Fromm 1955: 121). In Man for Himself he defined the biblical term emunah (faith, faithfulness) as a positive “personality trait” – namely, “firmness,” though in a later work he rendered it as “certainty” (Fromm 1968: 13o). In You Shall Be as Gods he found insight in the Hebrew word for hope, tikwah, which implies “tension” (Fromm 1964: 154n).

Fromm turned to biblical texts to highlight his differences with Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) over human psychological development and its inner dynamic. In arguing against Freud’s concept of an “Oedipal Complex,” he proposed instead a “Joseph complex,” in which the wish for unlimited love from one’s mother, and, at the same time, the aspiration to be the conquering hero, leads to the claim of supremacy with regard to both one’s father and one’s siblings (Fromm 1959: 63).

At times, Fromm defended the biblical text. He maintained that God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart (Exod 7:3) should not be interpreted as
“vengeful and deceitful,” but rather as an affirmation that any act that will necessarily happen (including the “unavoidable” hardening of Pharaoh’s heart) is “God’s will” (Fromm 1966: 101). Fromm extolled the biblically-rooted Jewish Sabbath as a day of joy and of freedom from time and death (Fromm 1951: 241–49). He also cited classic rabbinic midrashim or interpretations that he regarded as “vivid,” such as the “old Jewish legend” that the Red Sea parted only after “the first man had jumped into the sea” (Fromm 1947: 209; 1966: 116).

Fromm regarded the biblical messianic hope as the “next step” in a process of history “brought about” as people emerge from “delusion and from half-slumber,” becoming free, solving their own problems, “becoming fully human and achieving atonement.” He echoed Marx’s thinking in his view of messianic times being brought about “by the force generated by man’s existential dichotomy: being part of nature and yet transcending nature” (Fromm 1966: 123).

Fromm saw the “last logical step” of Bible interpretation as the abandonment of God and the recognition of a universal “religious attitude,” an “x experience,” which “has been articulated in various concepts,” Eastern, Western, and Middle Eastern. He allowed, however, that inasmuch as both believers and unbelievers strive for the same aim – the liberation and awakening of man – they both can appreciate, each in his own way, that love impels us to understand the other better than he understands himself. (Fromm 1966: 226–27)


Elliot B. Gertel

See also → Freud, Sigmund; → Psychoanalytic Interpretation

Frontlets

→ Totafot

Frost

Snow, ice, and frost were relatively rare in ancient Israel, especially at lower elevations (but more common in the highlands around Jerusalem), and biblical authors did not always differentiate between them with precision. Technically, “frost” is a phenomenon that occurs when the solid earth cools below water’s freezing point and the dew point near the surface of the ground, creating a thin icy veneer. The manna of Exod 16:14 is said to fall on the ground “like frost” (ḥakkĕpōr). In Ps 147:16, frost (kĕpōr) appears along with snow (īqīṣ) as material spread out upon the earth by YHWH, and in Job 38:29, ice (qērah) and frost (kĕpōr) are also mentioned in terms of divine meteorological acts and creation (see also Sir 43:19). The term qērah, sometimes translated as “ice,” may also refer to a frost-like substance, as in Gen 31:40; Jer 36:30, and Ps 147:17. See also qîṭôr (usually “smoke”) in Ps 148:8, which may refer to frost. Another term, bātānīl, possibly also means “frost” (or “hailstones”) in Ps 78:47, where the substance appears in a list of plagues wreaked upon Egypt in the exodus. See also various terms relating to frost in Wis 5:14; 16:29; Sir 3:15; Bar 2:25; and 2 Esd 7:41. Travelers to the north may have witnessed snow on distant mountains, and ice, snow, and related substances were associated with human disease (Exod 4:6; Num 12:10), moral purity (“white as snow”; Ps 51:7), and the divine mastery over creation (Job 38:22).


Brian Daak

See also → Rain; → Snow

Frost, Robert

The American poet Robert Frost was born in San Francisco in 1874 and moved with his mother to Lawrence, Maine, when his father died in 1895. The northeastern United States became his true home and left a deep physical, psychological, and spiritual imprint upon his poetic career until his death in 1963. That poetic career met with both popular success and also keen critical recognition. His melodic lines, startling imagery, and artistic craft garnered four Pulitzer Prizes for separate volumes.

Although his mother read the classics and the Bible to him when he was a boy, and although he attended Harvard University from 1897 to 1899, withdrawing because of illness, Frost tended to pose as a rural sage, a philosopher-farmer. He was much more than that, particularly when he delved...